

2002

Immigrant, exiled and hybrid: nineteenth-century Latin American women travel writers

Luz M. Hincapie
University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

University of Wollongong

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Recommended Citation

Hincapie, Luz M., Immigrant, exiled and hybrid: nineteenth-century Latin American women travel writers, Master of Arts thesis, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, 2002. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/2175>

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**IMMIGRANT, EXILED AND HYBRID:
NINETEENTH-CENTURY LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN TRAVEL WRITERS**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

Master of Arts (Post-colonial Literatures)

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

LUZ MERCEDES HINCAPIE BETANCOURT

BA, Intercultural Studies (with emphasis on Latin America)

Faculty of Arts, Department of English

2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis supervisors, Paul Sharrad and Anne Collett, for their help in the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank Robyn Foster and administrative staff for their help. Finally, I am very grateful to my partner, Marta Cabrera for all her support. This thesis is dedicated to all nineteenth-century Latin American women among which are my grandmothers and great grandmothers.

ABSTRACT

This research on three selected Latin American women travel writers of the nineteenth century focuses concretely on the topic of identity vis-à-vis the displacement experience. To approach the question, a cross-disciplinary methodology has been employed. Based on a textual discourse analysis, the methodology includes applications of literary theory (travel writing specifically), post-colonial theory and gender issues situated specifically in relation to the context of Latin America in the nineteenth century.

The selected authors and their texts are: María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo, Countess of Merlin's *Viaje a la Habana*, Soledad Acosta de Samper's *Viaje a España en 1892* and Juana Manuela Gorriti's *La tierra natal* and the narration "Impresiones y Paisajes" (from *Misceláneas*). They were chosen for their diverse travelling experiences: migration, work/leisure and exile, respectively with consideration given to their different national origins (Cuba, Colombia and Argentina).

The analysis focuses on the way the authors construct an identity in their texts and identifies the strategies employed in order to do so. Thus, a discursive analysis of Merlin's text shows how the author reconstructs a double national identity through her self-fashioning both as Cuban Creole and as a French Countess. In the case of Acosta, her text constituted a tool to build an erudite, scientific voice for the author in a time when the constraints on the production of women's travelogues pointed towards more typically "feminine" discourses. Finally, Gorriti's text permitted the author to regain a past lost by exile and to construct a national identity based on a tri-national belonging.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
 Introduction	 3
 Chapter I. Peregrinations: Displacement and Identity in the Travel Writing of Three Latin American Women	
Introduction	16
Searching for the Latin American Travellers	19
Autobiography and the Travelling Self	22
Discourse(s) in Women's Travel Writing	24
Questions of Identity	27
How to Read Latin American Travel Writers	30
 Chapter II. <i>Viaje a la Habana</i>: a French-Cuban Aristocrat's Search for Identity	
María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo	34
Voyage to Havana	37
The <i>Patria</i> and God	39
The Creole Aristocracy	44
Merlin and Slavery	50
The Countess Encounters <i>Her Primitive Others</i>	56
Reconciling Identities: Journey to the Past	67

Chapter III. Soledad Acosta de Samper: the Self-fashioning of an Erudite *Criolla*

Delegate of Colombia	71
The General's Daughter	75
The History and Architecture of Power	77
Recovering the Bonds of Filial Affection	89
The Inevitable Dichotomy: Civilisation versus Barbarism	96
Acosta de Samper's Equality of the Classes	102
The Equality of the Sexes? Or the vulnerability of two women travelling alone	105
The Construction of Identity for a <i>fin de siècle</i> Colombian Woman	113

Chapter IV. Juana Manuela Gorriti: A Herstory of Exile and Displacement

"Siempre está por marcharse, siempre quiere volver"	116
The Exiles of Juana Manuela	118
Journey to Recover the Ephemeral Past	123
The Importance of Society for Gorriti	131
The Patriotic Voyager or Gorriti's Self-Definition	145
The Sorrow of Farewells	154

Conclusion	159
-------------------	-----

Bibliography	163
---------------------	-----

INTRODUCTION

This research on Latin American women travel writers of the nineteenth century is informed by a triple purpose: first, the desire to re-discover and to rescue from oblivion the names and travelogues of a number of Latin American women; second, the desire to read and analyse those texts from a perspective other than the merely biographical or of simply inscribing them in the gallery of “the great women of Latin America”; and third, the hope that the reading of these texts will provide new insights into the life of Latin American women and into the way text and identity are mutually, discursively produced. Hence, the perspective proposed here is that of a textual discursive analysis, which takes into account the textual production of identity in the face of the experience of displacement.

In order to accomplish such a purpose, this introduction will place the women writers analysed here, as well as their texts, in the context of nineteenth-century European, North American and Latin American travel writing production. This contextualising is necessary in order to establish comparisons between the immense recognition that English and North American women travel writers enjoy in contrast to the “invisibility” of their Latin American counterparts. Such recognition has been made explicit not only by the re-publishing of nineteenth-century travelogues by English and North American women, but also by the growing number of academic texts analysing their works.

Although fewer and less known than the Anglo-American texts, Latin American travelogues are important historical and literary documents that provide an insight into the lives and times of their authors and into the discourses circulating during the period of national construction

in the nineteenth century. The comparison between Anglo-American and Latin American women travel writers also reveals the connections between the colonial (European) and the neo-colonial (Latin American) discourses of the time as well as the agency of these authors in their construction. The comparison, however, ends here since the way in which Latin American women were able to insert their voices in the traditionally male activity of travel writing led them on different paths to those of their contemporary European and North American women travel writers. In this sense, this project involves geographically specific research questions regarding the topic of identity and displacement. In addition to discussing these issues, this introduction will also describe the criteria for the selection of the texts included in this analysis and the methodology that will be used throughout the thesis.

I

The nineteenth century was a period of modernisation and change in most parts of the world. It witnessed incredible advances in transportation technology, through the invention of the steam engine. During this same period, a boom in travel writing was explainable by the increasing facility and speed in transportation, which made travelling much more frequent than before, and by other factors, among which Western imperialism in Asia, Oceania and Africa is of particular importance. The “era of high imperialism”, between 1815 and 1914, “a period of unparalleled expansion” (Said 41) precipitated an enormous number of travelogues written by Western travellers, which today are studied abundantly. The colonial enterprise itself represented a special challenge to travel. Paul Fussell acknowledges the connections between these two phenomena in connection to the British Empire:

The geographical and linguistic insularity of the English is one cause of their unique attraction-repulsion to abroad, but another reason they make such interesting travelers

is their national snobbery engendered by two centuries of wildly successful imperialism (...) Significantly, there is no Travelers's Club in New York. There is one in London. Its original requirement was an achievement of travel a thousand miles from London. (74, 76)

This conception of travel is concerned with a white male subject invested with authority. Nonetheless, women also travelled even before the nineteenth century, and for different reasons --as companions to men, as pilgrims such as Margery Kempe, or for their health. Some published their travelogues; for instance, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters Written During her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa*, published in 1763, and Mary Wollestonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, published in 1796 (Frawley 21). However, it is during the nineteenth century that travel and writing worked to enable significant numbers of women to cross physical and ideological distances.

At the beginning of the century, women frequently travelled as family members --as mothers, wives, and daughters-- of the bureaucrats, missionaries and merchants of the Empire. As the century progressed, more women, though accompanied, travelled with a defined sense of personal interest and professional purpose, while others went abroad for work reasons --as governesses or missionaries for example-- and still others travelled with the informal objective of learning. Many Victorian women such as Mary Gaunt and Lucie Duff-Gordon, however, travelled alone at least in part to express their independence:

In the nineteenth century, because of the long peace after the Battle of Waterloo and the increasing prosperity of Britain, more and more women found themselves able to travel to Europe even without a male companion (...) But Europe could not long satisfy the adventurous Victorian woman traveller, so she sailed around the world (Lady Brassey), joined a French man-of-war in the South Seas (Constance Gordon-Cummings), rode across Arabia (Lady Anne Blunt), sailed up the Nile (Amelia Edwards and Lucie Duff Gordon), journeyed to America (Fanny Trollope and Harriet Martineau), and even ventured to remote corners of the Orient (Isabella Bird Bishop and Annie Taylor). By the end of the century, handbooks for women boldly asserted that 'nowadays ... a hundred women travel to one who ventured from the security of her roof tree in bygone days' (...) (Stevenson in Korte 110)

It was precisely the travel experience, which enabled these women to write since they gained spaces to do so; their voices became public and gained cultural authority through the publication of their accounts in books, but especially in magazines and journals. In this way, they were able to establish connections with a part of their culture that until then, and due to their lack of education, had evaded them (Frawley 24). These Victorian women began to be singled out as examples of the “new freedom and prowess of women” (Barnes Stevenson in Frawley 23).

It is no surprise then that a bibliographic research of the books written by these female travel writers shows a clear and interesting pattern; it was mostly British Victorian women followed by North American women who were able to travel and to write. The nineteenth-century British Empire produced travel writing for a readership eager for images of the colonies. The United States, on the other hand, experienced an incredible political stability and economic growth unknown in the rest of the American continent. Nowadays their travelogues (and corresponding academic studies) are widely available in most cases. A rapidly growing list of compilations of travel writing by nineteenth-century Victorian and North American women demonstrates this: Karen Lawrence’s *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition*, Jane Robinson’s *Unsuitable for Ladies: an Anthology of Women Travelers*, Marion Tinling’s *With Women’s Eyes: Visitors to the New World 1775-1918*, and Mary Suzanne Schriber’s, *Telling Travels: Selected Writings by Nineteenth-Century American Women Abroad* are some examples.

Although fewer, there are also a number of travel accounts by women from other European nations (especially France, Germany and Spain) and also by European and North American women who travelled to Latin America: like the several editions of Frances Calderón de la

Barca's *Life in Mexico During a Residence of Two Years in That Country*, June Hahner's *Women Through Women's Eyes*, *Latin American Women in Nineteenth-Century Travel Accounts* and the notable compilation in the Spanish language *Viajeras anglosajonas en México* (*Anglo-Saxon Women Travellers in Mexico*), by Alicia Diadiuk.

II

For Latin America the nineteenth century is a key foundational period. First, it meant independence from three centuries of Spanish colonial rule and the birth of the modern nation-state. Travelling was boosted throughout the century by a number of factors: first, the collapse of the Spanish rule put an end to many restrictions on mobilisation within the continent and also beyond its boundaries; second, great importance was placed on the exploration/exploitation of the natural and human resources of the new countries not only on the part of the Creole rulers but also on the part of British and French entrepreneurs who visited the Latin American nations; third, the establishment of businesses, embassies and consulates overseas started the era of national contact between the Creole elite from all of the Latin American nations and Europe as well as the United States. Some European countries and North America came to embody the model for modernisation of the new nations after three centuries of colonial miasma.

France and England in particular, and the United States as the century progressed, witnessed a constant flow of Creoles --be it politician, merchant, writer or all of these at once, as was often the case-- who journeyed in a sort of civilising passage to their preferred destination.

Prominent figures like Domingo Faustino Sarmiento¹, José María Heredia and Andrés Bello², among others, travelled with the objective of learning from the “more advanced societies” and in order to establish economical, social and political nexuses. Their reflection on the mirror of the “civilised” nations of the world was also a means by which to construct a discourse of identity for the new nations. Many of these travellers also wrote about their experience in a number of genres --from autobiographies to articles to book-length travelogues. It is this displacement experience that also enabled women to travel overseas since the male travellers were often accompanied by wives, daughters, sisters and even mothers.

If the average European and North American woman's role in society was limited to the household during the nineteenth century, Latin America was certainly not an exception. Since colonial times women were subjected to the male both by written and unwritten laws and also by institutions such as marriage, slavery and the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, there were also spaces (even within these institutions) where women were able to exert power and influence. It is precisely the existence of these spaces which enabled some Latin American women to travel and moreover, to write. The Latin American women who travelled and wrote, however, belonged to the upper strata of society and were enabled to travel by their economic and/or social status.

Hence, the quintessential Latin American woman travel writer belonged to the ruling classes. This position enabled her access to education, which sometimes merely meant reading and writing and a few more things like embroidery and religious education. In short then, the nineteenth-century Latin American women who travelled and wrote about their travels

¹ See David Viñas' *De Sarmiento a Dios, viajeros argentinos a USA*.

generally share the same traits: they are from a privileged elite; they are educated women and some are already professional writers; they are Catholic and they are all white. Furthermore, their reasons for travelling were mostly subject to those they travelled with, that is as a companion to their husbands (Catalina Rodríguez de Morales), to their fathers (the Larráinzar sisters) and so forth, although a number of women also managed to travel by themselves and for their own purpose, without depending on a male companion (Soledad Acosta de Samper, Juana Manuela Gorriti, Aurelia Castillo de González).

III

After two hundred years of national construction, the lives of Latin American woman have changed in many spheres: legal, professional, in terms of education, etc. However, topics related to women in general have been traditionally neglected in the academy in Latin America. The emergence of feminist movements in Europe and North America, which were replicated in Latin America, contributed to the creation of a movement which began to produce knowledge about women. Frequently departing from Euro-American feminism (although not impermeable to its influence) and focusing more on social issues, Latin American academia, aided by the entrance of women into universities since the 1950's, has been trying to retrieve women from theoretical and academic "invisibility".

Moreover, the immigration of Latin American scholars to the United States and the growing interest in Latin American issues in that country have resulted in an interesting body of work across various disciplines. Examples of this are the studies by Mary Louise Pratt and Doris

² See Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*.

Meyer on Latin American writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jean Franco's research on Mexican women, June Hahner's work on nineteenth-century Brazilian women intellectuals, Francine Masiello's and Gwen Kirkpatrick's respective studies on Argentinean women, and Asunción Lavrin's work on the history of Latin American women. These studies are contributing by filling the vast gaps in the knowledge about Latin American women from all times and walks of life.³

Although a great deal of research about the topic is yet to be done, this does not mean that Latin American women had no voice in the past. Their voices resound in many places of the "imagined community" of the nation, to employ Anderson's useful term. Most Latin American countries count women among their "great citizens" and many women writers have been widely recognised. Names like that of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Gabriela Mistral, Teresa de la Parra, Clorinda Matto de Turner, and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda are hailed as glories of the "national" literature of their respective countries. Recognition, however, is not egalitarian for all genres; autobiography (Molloy 2) and travel writing, as we shall see, are genres that remain largely uncharted. The authors of the travelogues studied here, for instance, are often recognised for their works in other genres while their travel writing is still unexplored.

The lack of information on the travel writing of Latin American women is partly explained by the fact that the great boom in travel writing by women as experienced in England and the United States did not occur in this area on such a large scale. The women who travelled and

³ See also Helena Araújo, *La Sherezada criolla. Ensayos sobre escritura femenina latinoamericana*; Susan Bassnett, *Knives and Angels: Women Writers in Latin America* and Beth Miller, *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols*.

wrote were fewer and, unlike many European and North American women who specialised in travel books, they usually wrote only one book or some articles on their travels. In fact, travel writing oftentimes took the form of letters, journals, diaries, articles in the women's journals -- that is, journals written for women and/or by women-- that flourished in nineteenth-century Latin America.⁴ All of these were considered "minor genres" with an ambiguous and liminal character, situated midway between fact and fiction, the public and the private.⁵ It is precisely this use of a "minor genre" which then permitted women to insert their voices in a traditional male space. As Pfister notes, travel writing's:

very hybridity (...) has prevented it from being taken seriously as literature and has, at the same time, protected it from normative generic rules and thus preserved for it a greater freedom of experimentation. No wonder it has become one of those genres in which the traces of female writing have inscribed themselves particularly early and particularly insistently. (in Korte 108)

Despite the fictional dimension present in all travel writing, this study is concerned with travel accounts considered non-fictional as confirmed by historiography. This does not mean however, that the study is concerned with the degree of historical accuracy of the travel account, with its truth or falseness, only with its textual construction of identity.

IV

The search for primary sources on Latin American women's travel writing revealed that most of these texts are not available in contemporary editions, not even in the form of anthologies. Some of the travelogues are to be found in the national libraries of the country of origin of the

⁴ See Londoño, "Las publicaciones periódicas dirigidas a la mujer, 1858-1939."

⁵ This contrasts with the usual book-length travelogue(s) written by men. Despite the greater "visibility" of Latin American male travel writers, the genre also lacks academic research. Latin American male travel writers, however, have been studied slightly more (i.e. Sarmiento) and re-published in some anthologies such as Estuardo Nuñez' *Viajeros hispanoamericanos (Temas continentales)*, David Viñas' *De Sarmiento a Dios, viajeros argentinos a USA*, and Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo's *Bibliografía colombiana de viajes*.

author and some are housed in libraries in the United States. The final destination of some other texts is unknown. Despite this fragmentary panorama, some effort to compile and analyse travelogues is being made. One such effort is Lilianet Brintrup's *Viaje y escritura. Viajeras románticas chilenas* (*Travel and Writing. Romantic Chilean Women Travellers*), a compilation of writings with a regional perspective. Again this serves as a contrast between the growing number of compilations and studies of female authors from overseas in Latin America and the scarcity of texts on/by female travellers from Latin America.

Moreover, research on individual authors appears scattered among articles and chapters in books as well as in academic dissertations. Some examples of these are: Lucía de las Mercedes Suárez' dissertation, *Caribbean Women Claiming their Islands*, which touches on Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and the Countess of Merlin; Mónica Szurmuk's "*Viajeras*": *Women's Travel Writing and the Construction of Self and National Identity in Argentina, 1850-1930*, a Ph.D. dissertation which includes discussions on Eduarda Mansilla, Emma de la Barra, Ada María Elflein and Delfina Bunge de Gálvez; and the compilation *Las Voces olvidadas. Antología crítica de narradoras mexicanas nacidas en el siglo XIX* (*The Forgotten Voices: A Critical Anthology of Mexican Women Narrators Born in the Nineteenth Century*) by Ana Rosa Domenella and Dora Pasternac that includes a section on the travel chronicles of Enriqueta and Ernestina Larráinzar. Most travel accounts by prominent female authors occupy a secondary position in relation to their body of work and thus only those texts considered important, usually their novels, are studied or re-published. Hence, bibliographic research on women travel writers from Latin America is an arduous, quasi-archaeological task.

Notwithstanding the above, an initial bibliographic research of Latin American women travellers who wrote about their voyages has provided surprising results. It revealed that, during the nineteenth century, there were at least fifteen female authors travelling within Latin America or from Latin America to other parts of the world who wrote about these experiences. For the purpose of this study, three authors were chosen from that initial list. The criteria for the selection of the authors were; first, a desire to cover different geographical areas of Latin America such as the Caribbean (Cuba), the North of South America (Colombia), and the Andean region (Peru, Bolivia, Argentina) as well as different travel destinations, and second, a desire to analyse different experiences of displacement such as immigration (the Countess of Merlin), exile (Juana Manuela Gorriti), and leisure/work travel (Soledad Acosta de Samper).

While travel writing has been widely studied by several disciplines including post-colonial theory, ethnography, historiography, and literature, this study is methodologically based on a contextualisation of the author's biography and a textual discourse analysis which focuses specifically on the topic of identity since the travel experience often challenges the stability of the self. Such a self integrates new experiences and radical geographical and cultural differences within a stable cultural frame. Furthermore, the question of identity is traditionally a distinctive feature of Latin American thought even in the first centuries of colonial rule, as Pagden has shown, and in the aftermath of independence, as the writings of Bolívar, Martí, Sarmiento or Rodó show. The inclusion of women in the question of identity is, therefore, an opportunity to place women in the map of Latin America's cultural history.

Hence, the challenging of the presumed fixed cultural frame typical of modern constructions of identity by the experience of travel leads to a number of questions which will be discussed in depth during the study: what identity did these women construct upon writing their travel books considering their class, religion, nationality and gender? How was this identity contrasted in relation to the encounter with *others* in general and specifically with other women? Particular emphasis will be placed on how the experience of displacement as well as that of writing composes and recomposes stable although mutable identities.

In formal terms, the study consists of four chapters. The first chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the research in which travel writing in general is discussed and defined, followed by a discussion of women's autobiography with particular emphasis on Latin American autobiography. The question of identity and hybridity is then discussed and defined with a discussion of the possibilities of a Latin American feminist critique to close the chapter.

The second chapter deals with the travelogue *Viaje a La Habana* (*Voyage to Havana*) by María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo, best known as the Countess of Merlin, a Cuban immigrant in France. Chapter Three analyses the text *Viaje a España en 1892* (*Voyage to Spain in 1892*) by the Colombian writer Soledad Acosta de Samper, who was invited as delegate of her country to Spain's commemoration of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. The fourth chapter studies two texts by Juana Manuela Gorriti, an Argentinean writer exiled in Bolivia and then an immigrant in Peru. These texts are *La tierra natal* (*The Native Land*) and a narration of a voyage called "Impresiones y Paisajes" from her compilation of writings *Misceláneas* (*Miscellaneous*). These three analytical chapters are followed by the conclusions of the study. All the translations, from the Spanish, of the quotations from these travelogues are

my own and the original spelling, grammar and accent marks have been preserved. Considering the lack of information on Latin American women travel writers mentioned above, this study hopes to contribute to the knowledge of this academic area, which as far as I know is one of the first efforts to do so in this form.

CHAPTER I

Peregrinations: Displacement and Identity in the Travel Writing of

Three Latin American Women

Sin embargo, si la opción que se presenta es viajar o morir, si entonces, viajar es darle una forma feliz a las desdichas de la vida, el viaje resulta una medicina eficaz.

[However, if the choice is to die or to travel, if traveling is a way to give a happy form to the sorrows of life, then travel is an effective medicine.] (Domínguez 23)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: first, it briefly discusses some views on the term “travel writing” and offers a suitable definition to be used in the dissertation; second, it outlines the theoretical framework which will be employed to analyse selected Latin American women’s travel writing; and third, it discusses the possibility of formulating a suitable theoretical basis on which to read Latin American women travel writers.

Early travel literature is related to the topic of the voyage east, “which promised an opening up and a reordering of the known world” (Mezciems 1). Works like Lucian’s *The True History*, written in the second century and Mandeville’s *Travels* belong to this tradition where the fact that the voyage is imaginary is not important (Mezciems 3-7). Even the veracity of Marco Polo’s travels is still a matter of debate, as Wood discusses in *Did Marco Polo go to China?* Therefore, this particular version of travel literature makes the dividing line between fact and fiction, documentation and exaggeration quite elusive. It includes the illusion of “bearing witness” to something as much as depicting marvels to please the audience; it is documentation and escape all at once.

With the discovery of America, the level of accuracy of the travel account gained importance. The narratives of Columbus and Vespucci produced a worldly reality that kings, patrons of the enterprise, wanted to believe (Mezciems 7). Descriptions of the American continent by *cronistas* such as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (*Sumario de la Historia Natural de las Indias*, 1526), among many others, served to construct a different and peculiar American nature and echoed in much later works such as that of Alexander von Humboldt.¹

In those narratives written by Europeans about America, knowledge and colonialism are closely linked. This discourse lingered until well after the independence of the American nations in the early nineteenth century in the form of scientific and commercial exploration. Hence, travel writing overlaps with other discourses of colonialism such as bureaucratic and military organisation, demographic reports, geographic mapping/naming, botanical expeditions and it encodes a number of agendas; political, economic, spiritual, scientific and so forth. After independence, however, the increased mobility of the Creoles² created an inversion of the situation; thus the gaze of the European traveller in America was replicated by that of the American traveller in Europe (and elsewhere). This travel literature is also linked with a number of interests and disciplinary approaches that range from geography and history to politics, arts and economy.

The genre however, is not easy to define. More recently authors like Paul Fussell, for instance, have considered the travel book as an amalgam of diverse literary elements. In his *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (1980) he quotes Norman Douglas' remark

¹ Humboldt was in many cases the model followed, after independence, by internal explorers.

² Creole is understood here as a group composed of the descendents of Spaniards; they were white and belonged to the upper classes of Latin American society and thus enjoyed economic and political influence both before and after independence.

that “the reader of a good travel book is entitled not only to an exterior voyage (...) but to an interior, a sentimental or temperamental voyage” (Fussell in Shattock 151). In another view, Peter Keating (although restricted to England) studies the journey which explores the range and variety of human life. This “social exploration”, rather common in the nineteenth century, entails the analysis of a social class by another (Shattock 151). Other views suggest that travel literature is a metaphor of the journey of life.

This quick overview of ideas on travel writing only shows the multiple perspectives that this fluid genre can offer. Post-colonial criticism, for instance, has established and analysed the connections between travel literature and empire (Pratt). A wide range of disciplines, from ethnography (Clifford) to historiography (Pagden) to gender studies (Mills) also increasingly deal with travel literature. Moreover, these works employ a multi-disciplinary approach in the analysis of travelogues.

Access to the analysis of the selected travelogues (all non-fictional accounts written in the first-person) by Latin American women travel writers of the nineteenth century is through critical studies of autobiography since the travelogue occupies a position between fiction and autobiography. Therefore, some theories on women’s autobiographical writing such as those by Sidonie Smith, Leigh Gilmore and others, and studies more specific to Latin American autobiographical writing such as those by Sylvia Molloy, will be employed to the extent that their ideas are applicable to the chosen texts.

However, the reading of these texts is not limited to the literary, and so the use of another set of theories is necessary. Mary Louise Pratt’s analysis has been important in revealing the repetitiveness of certain sequences which describe the discursive structures within colonial texts. Her concept of “the-monarch-of-all-I-survey scene”, where “explorer-man

paints/possesses newly unveiled landscape-woman” (*Imperial Eyes* 213) is an example of such a discursive structure. Her analysis of travel writing and imperialism is pertinent here, since it situates these travelogues in the era of neo-colonial imperial relations as experienced during the second half of the nineteenth century by Latin America. Pratt also devotes three chapters of her text *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* to topics related to America and one to the role of what she calls *exploratrices sociales* (social explorers) (155), that is, European women travel writers such as Maria Graham and Flora Tristan who focused on the depiction of the social world; “a form of female imperial intervention in the contact zone” (160). The voyages of Latin American women to other parts of America and to Europe also occurred in contact zones in which these travellers were subject to the discourses in circulation.

Finally, and since the main concern of this research is the question of identity and how it is constructed, Sara Mills’ approach to discourse theory will be employed. Mills’ view can be summarised in her own words, “how was (...) colonial strength negotiated in texts by women who were conventionally seen as not to be part of the colonial expansion?” (*Discourses of Difference* 1). Mills questions the idea that women did not have agency in the colonial enterprise (understood here as the Western and mainly European territorial expansion and control of those territories). Whilst Latin American women travel writers were not part of such enterprise, they did have agency in internal colonialism and in (re)producing the colonial discourse abroad as well.

Searching for the Latin American Travellers

As was mentioned before, travel writing is a genre (or sub-genre) with a long genealogy. Hence, any attempt to define travel writing should begin by situating it historically. The

travelogues analysed here were published in the nineteenth century in Latin America.³ These geohistorical coordinates place the texts (and their writers) at the moment of national construction, after independence from Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule,⁴ with its revaluation of the Spanish colonial heritage and the competing social and political models for the American societies. In consequence, travel writing takes a very precise form.

In Latin America, the genre never occupied a prominent position as it did in Europe at the same time. In travel writing by European men the narrator figure is the adventure hero, traditionally the white colonial male subject described by Pratt. The narrative tended towards the impersonal, authoritative and scientific. Men obtained their authority to state the “truth” because they were white westerners often travelling on government missions, embassies, or for trading purposes and hence backed by these institutions --what Pratt aptly calls the “capitalist vanguard” (*Imperial Eyes* 148).

Latin American travellers were rather writer/statesmen (*letrados*) in search of models of economic and political organization for the newly independent republics in a “civilising voyage”, which being political in essence thus entered the realm of the public. Travel writing enabled public men to compare economic practices and political organisations in the task of setting up a model of nationhood. This does not imply, however, that the construction of a nationality is the only way of reading these travelogues (or any other text). As Molloy argues, the preoccupation with national identity permeates the text as “an ever renewed scene of crisis necessary to the *rhetoric* of self-figuration” (5, emphasis in the original).

³ I employ the term “Latin America” because its use is more widespread, although the analysis does not include texts from Brazil.

⁴ The exception is Cuba, which did not achieve independence until 1898.

Latin American women, on the other hand, although not officially recognised as an active part in the formation of the nation-state, (they were generally not scientists, diplomatic or government-sponsored) also managed to travel and write about their voyages, particularly in the form of letters, journal articles and in papers read in literary salons, although some women also published book-length accounts. Women turned increasingly to the genre of travel writing as their respective countries acquired more stability and probably also because of the emergence of a culture of leisure, as Szurmuk argues for the case of Argentina (87).

Woman's travel writing also challenged the binary construction of public/male vs. private/female, as some of these travelogues were published and received considerable attention during their time. This was the case of *La Havane*, by the Countess of Merlin, which was edited several times and translated into Spanish. Despite the subordination of women to men (in the form of matrimonial restraints, different legal rights, limited education and the physical difficulties of travel and so forth), Latin American women were able to insert their voices into the literary space and the genre of travel writing and some like Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and Juana Manuela Gorriti even achieved fame and recognition during their life.⁵ It is no surprise then that at certain points these writings adopted typical (male) models employed in travel writing: some adopted an erudite-scientific voice (like Soledad Acosta de Samper) or an explorer-adventurer voice (like some passages of the Countess of Merlin's travelogue, where she compares herself to Columbus and the conquistadors).

⁵ Other female authors even employed the essay as a form of public expression to refer to the situation of women: Juana Manso's *Emancipación moral de la mujer* (Moral Emancipation of Women, 1858), Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera's *Influencia de la mujer en la civilización moderna* (Influence of Women on Modern Civilization, 1874), Clorinda Matto de Turner's *Las obreras del pensamiento en la América del Sud* (Women Workers of Thought in South America, 1895) and Soledad Acosta de Samper's *La mujer en la sociedad moderna* (Women in Modern Society, 1895) are some remarkable examples. See Pratt's "'Don't Interrupt Me' The Gender Essay as Conversation and Countercanon".

The research on Latin American women travel writers, however, is still precarious and the number of texts are far less than those of British and American travellers.⁶ In consequence, this dissertation points first to the existence of these texts and to the need to rescue and analyse them. More importantly, it recognises the active role played by these women not only in the formation of their nations, but also in the neo-colonial order. The discourse of these writings is eclectic and heterogenous; it works both within and against colonialism and patriarchy. A close reading of travel writing by Latin American women thus reveals a universe of tensions and apparent contradictions, which are rendered coherent through the analysis of the discourses through which the writing takes shape.

In this way, a definition of travel writing suitable to the purposes of this dissertation is needed, a definition that encompasses the dimensions of representation and displacement, of the new and the usual, set against the backdrop of neo-colonial and gender power relations. Hence, travel writing will be employed hereafter to mean the representation, the re-telling of a journey beyond the boundaries of the habitual place of residence, a movement linked to a strong sense of bearing witness. It is a narrative construct closely linked to the personal history of the travel writer (another representation in itself) and its multiple intersections with the historical and with the geographical location.

Autobiography and the Travelling Self

The proposed definition of travel writing, by mingling personal identity and displacement, is thus closely related to autobiography, which provides ways to understand how the self narrates itself. A definition of autobiography should encompass the way in which the self

⁶ Travelogues by (Anglo-American) women travel writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been reprinted in recent years by feminist presses like Virago, as Mills notes (*Discourses of Difference*, 4), while most Latin American travel writers are still virtually unknown.

writes itself, but also should place that self in relation to discourses of power and identity. Hence, autobiography is a collection of discourses and practices employed by a subject to represent itself along cultural modes of truth and identity construction.

The subject assumes “the speaking ‘I’ as the subject of the narrative, rendering the ‘I’ both subject and object. From that operational vantage point, autobiography includes letters, journals, diaries, and oral histories as well as formal autobiography” (Smith 19). Through the “autobiographical act” the writer interprets her past experience as understood by her present experience with the intention of giving coherence and meaning to her life (Smith 46). The autobiographer cannot, however, fully capture her subjectivity or the range of her experience and so “the narrative ‘I’ becomes a fictive persona” (Smith 46). This fictive persona reveals more about the author’s present experience than her past experience and about the way in which she situates herself and her life story vis-à-vis the cultural ideologies and identity she is part of (Smith 47). Therefore, autobiography reveals gaps not only in time and space, or between the individual and the social, but also between the manner and matter of its discourse (Benstock 11). Autobiography is then an impossible task; it assumes self-knowledge but is in fact fictional.

By referring to travel writing, it is implicit that the fictive persona is displaced from its habitual residence and faces a whole new set of relations sprung from the transit, a quite common situation in the nineteenth-century Latin America; “the autobiographer *moves away* –from the province to the capital, from his country to another country, from one continent to another” (Molloy 168, emphasis in the original) for different reasons, be it education opportunities, migration, exile, marriage, civil wars and also as a mark of modernity, as was the case of turn-of-the-century travel.

Autobiography, like travel writing, implies a sense of witnessing:

A strong testimonial stance informs autobiographical writing in Spanish America (...) autobiographers will continue to see themselves as witnesses. The fact that this testimony is often endowed with the aura of terminal visions (...) not only aggrandizes the author's individual persona but reflects the communal dimension sought for the autobiographical venture. Spanish American self-writing is an exercise in memory doubled by a ritual of commemoration (...) (Molloy 8)

Hence, the fictional "I" acquires validity through this resource as well as through tactics of historicity, public utility, group bonding, testimonial service and so on (Molloy 10). In addition, a female autobiographer will recreate a number of tensions, like those born from the interaction between the local and the foreign, class, race, gender, colonialism and neo-colonialism. The course of these tensions is discernable through discourse analysis and often through the shifts in narrative voice and style.

Discourse(s) in Women's Travel Writing

As was mentioned earlier, Sara Mills' work offers a discursive analysis of women's travel writing in an approach that seeks to fulfil the absence of gender issues in the study of colonial discourse. Mills argues in her *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, that females have been traditionally neglected in the analysis of colonial discourse; they have been portrayed as participating in the colonial enterprise only as signifiers, but not as producers of signification (59). In Mills' theorisation there are traditionally two ways in which women are represented in colonialism, first as the British *memsahib* or married woman who needs the protection of her husband, and second as the sexually available colonised woman (59). Although she realises that gender issues do not conform neatly with Orientalist/colonialist discourse since discourses of femininity also inform women's travel texts, she criticises those analyses of women's travel writing which

omit their agency in colonialism. This is a view shared by Jenny Sharpe in her *Allegories of Empire*, which also seeks to expose the female role in imperialism.

Although the writers analysed in this dissertation come from an entirely different tradition than those analysed by Mills, her theory is, nevertheless, useful, since Latin American travel writers also participated in the discursive production of *others* throughout their texts, a characteristic that reveals the heterogeneous character of these travelogues. For example, colonial discourse and a persistent *othering* is evident throughout the Countess of Merlin's travelogue and even orientalism --as analysed by Said-- can be applied to the narrative of Soledad Acosta de Samper's trip to Spain.

Another useful aspect of Mills' argument is her approach to the constraints on production and reception of the texts written by women, which she sees as affected by textual, economic, social, political, historical and personal forces. Hence, the difference in the writing by males and by females is not a biological matter. For instance, women's travel writing is subject to several discourses, mainly the discourse of colonialism and imperialism and the discourse of femininity; "the power of patriarchy which acted upon them as middle-class women, through discourses of femininity: and the power of colonialism which acted upon them in relation to the people of the countries they describe in their books" (*Discourses of Difference* 18). Since being feminine meant a concern with relationships, spirituality, morality and domesticity, upon writing about these the narrator was allowed an authoritative voice that did not contravene the discursive parameters established for women. Other discursive constraints involved the type of events and information which women were allowed to narrate. It was inappropriate, for instance, to talk about sex or about the colonial subject's suffering under imperialism (or colonial or neo-colonial relations). Thus the female travel writer had to keep in mind these constraints

of production in order to guarantee the favourable reception of her text. This is also true of the writers analysed here and particularly, in Juana Manuela Gorriti who was conscious of the subject matter which a woman writer should limit herself to in order to guarantee a good reception of her text.

Some of these perspectives are relevant to the neo-colonial context of the nineteenth century. Latin American women lived in a patriarchal society in which men occupied positions of authority and power. In general men had rights over women that they did not have over other men, and women did not have over themselves. Men also defined acceptable female conduct, controlled the justice system and were thus able to punish those who overstepped the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. However, the culture of patriarchy was never an absolute reality as it was in theory; negotiation was possible within the coordinates of race and class, which determined what was expected from a woman and defined the roles open to her. Other features like age, marital conditions, local economic conditions and geographic location contributed as well to affect women's possibilities and their social positions (Socolow 178-179).

Therefore, colonial or neo-colonial discourses appear not as homogeneous, but rather discontinuous. It is precisely this feature, which makes it possible for female voices to insert themselves in "traditionally male" spaces. Women travel writers from Latin America offer for instance, examples of a woman employing a scientific discourse, like the aforementioned erudite voice employed by Acosta de Samper in her travelogue and an example of a woman employing political commentaries, like the Countess of Merlin, whose high position in the social hierarchy permitted the political commentaries against Spain and in favour of slavery in her *La Havane*.

Questions of Identity

The identity of the female writer, --of the fictive persona on the move-- is what lies at the heart of this discursive analysis of travel literature. This identity is made up of layers of discourses that are superimposed on each other and which can be isolated according to their relevance within a geo-historical location. Hence, a work dealing with Latin American travel writers has several implications. First, literacy in the context of Latin America is strongly linked to power as a sign of authority; as a way of establishing control and deterring chaos once the colonial order was destabilised. Writing became the sign of civilisation as much as the organiser of the Latin American political scene. Hence, a woman able to express herself through writing was a woman with access to power and political influence. The access to writing and publishing was also an indication of social status. Oftentimes, it also indicated the position in the racial hierarchy. In fact, the women whose writings will be analysed, all belong to privileged social classes, were white and educated.⁷

Religion also played an important role in Latin America since colonial times as a source of institutionalised control and via the Christianisation project, which along with literacy served as pillars of the civilising mission of Spain in the New World. The Church had enormous power over women, through the institution of marriage and through convents (although these were also used advantageously by some, like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Josefa del Castillo). Once the colonies freed themselves from Spain and Portugal, the Catholic Church maintained in general some power and influence, but it had to yield a

⁷ The access to education changed significantly for elite women. While colonial times offered very limited opportunities, the situation changed during the nineteenth century due to the growing secularisation, urbanisation and industrialisation of America in general. This movement helped middle class women gain access to education and even a profession (teaching or journalism, for example), see Lavrin

considerable portion of it on several occasions throughout the nineteenth century to the liberal sectors of society.

According to Francesca Denegri, the modernisation of the Latin American societies excluded religion from the realm of “truth” and relegated it to that of “belief”, where logic and reason does not operate (353). Since reason and logic were male areas, the ambit of “belief” became feminine and so religion became feminised. Its principal apostles would no longer be government authorities and *letrados*, but women, in other words, second-class citizens (354). Progressively fewer young elite men saw the attraction of an ecclesiastical or monastic career, while the population of women’s convents increased. Convents became useful to privileged women who could seclude themselves from society while keeping all their worldly privileges. In 1833, Flora Tristan, an anti-clerical socialist who visited the convent of Santa Catalina in Arequipa (Peru), observed that despite the vows of poverty, “the revenues of this community are enormous, but these ladies spend in proportion” (in Denegri 355).

The Catholic Church mobilised marginal majority groups (i.e. women, Indians) as a strategy in the struggle between Church and State, in an attempt to recover its traditional power (Denegri 354-355). Religion then appears as another way of constructing identity in nineteenth-century Latin America, although authors, mostly males, alternatively rejected the Catholic Church as a medieval institution and site of the irrational or defended it as a fundamental organiser of society according to their ideological orientation and their political aspirations.

The influence of religion is evidenced in women’s travel writing in Latin America through the use of the trope of “pilgrimage”, as Flora Tristan’s *Peregrinations d’une Paria* (*Peregrinations*

of a Pariah) and Juana Manuela Gorriti's *Peregrinaciones de un alma triste* (*Peregrinations of a Sad Soul*) show. The use of a term linked with selflessness, spirituality and humility permitted the authors to forge a space in a traditionally masculine genre. As Denegri states, "the strategy consisted of framing their social exploration narratives within religious discourse, which despite its anachronism [in the nineteenth century], was one of the few discourses available to women at the time" (352).

The other relevant factor in the construction of an identity in nineteenth-century Latin America was that of nationality. During the Independence wars the figure of the female hero, tied to a national territory was born (like Policarpa Salavarrieta, "martyr" of the resistance to Spain in New Granada [Colombia], and Juana Azurduy, nicknamed "Teniente Coronela de la Independencia", who fought alongside her husband in Alto Peru [Bolivia] against the Spaniards). After independence, which also facilitated mobility for the Creoles, nationalism was reinforced by several discourses, among which were cultural and scientific ones. The fact of physical displacement provided the opportunity of establishing comparisons and defining a national identity⁸ by means of creating an *other* identity against which to measure oneself. Women travel writers were thus able to establish comparisons with other countries, as Samper and Merlin did, or to do "social exploration", as Tristan did. In sum, this analysis focuses on how the female travel writers employ the circulating discourses of race, gender, class, religion and nationality to (re)compose an identity.

According to García-Canclini in his *Consumidores y ciudadanos. Conflictos multiculturales de la globalización*, modern identity was considered a stable, immutable construction, tied to a

⁸ The concept of *patria* (fatherland) is important in the discussions on how the authors identified with a nation-state. Although, *patria* is a feminine noun in the Spanish language, it is related to words which imply masculinity, such as patriarchy. To avoid confusion and preserve the feminine sense it has in the Spanish language, the term *patria* will be used throughout the text.

single language and to a national territory which implied a strong imaginary of “purity” and “authenticity”. These writings, however, reveal a hybridity sprung from various reconstructions of the self, including the one produced during the travel experience. The identity revealed in these is thus momentary, stable but ephemeral. Hybridity is clearly manifested in these writings. It appears in the Countess of Merlin’s writing of her travelogue in a language other than her mother tongue or her alternate posing as French Countess in Cuba or as an exiled Creole in France. It is also evident in Juana Manuela Gorriti’s forced exile(s) and subsequent divided affection for three nations, Argentina, Peru and Bolivia. An identity in transit is a hybrid identity *per se*.

How to Read Latin American Travel Writers

This analysis departs from French and Anglo-American theorisations of feminine writing and sexual difference. Those theories are useful because they have challenged the complacency with which Western discourse valued sexual difference in male and female writing. Despite employing theorisations by authors who have inherited that tradition, these have been taken from a critical perspective rather than adapted to suit the Latin American case. Hence, to circumvent problematisations dealing with “essential women”, a more historical and geographical perspective (intersected with considerations of race, class, gender, nation and religion) is taken in combination with a constructivist vision of women and their writings.

In this sense it is useful to note some of the difficulties in trying to apply these theories to the subject of analysis of this dissertation. For instance, Mills’ object of analysis is strictly European women travelling from the imperial centres to the colonies and writing about these. The Latin American women travel writers that will be discussed here, however,

show various patterns of displacement. While Soledad Acosta de Samper travelled from the American nation to the old metropolitan centre, the Countess of Merlin migrated from the colony to an imperial centre and then briefly travelled back to her country of origin. Finally, in Juana Manuela Gorriti's case, there is a constant displacement, sometimes by exile or by voluntary migration, within the boundaries of three South American nations.

More importantly, Mills' analysis poses a number of methodological problems since criteria for analysing women's travel writing "on its own terms" (*Discourses of Difference* 6) are difficult to establish, as she consciously acknowledges. Her task is to analyse women's travel writing as "constructed within a range of discursive pressures" (12). She rejects, however, the consideration of travel writing as autobiographical since she considers that label "as an attempt to deny women the status of creators of cultural artefacts" (12) since autobiography is viewed as a "simple" and direct transcription of the author's personal experience. This dissertation, on the contrary, sees autobiographical writing as itself a cultural construction and evaluates the personal history of the authors of the travelogues as fundamental in the construction of their identity, which is also seen as discursively produced.

Also related to her particular research on British women vis-a-vis imperialism, Mills' vision that women travel writers are more inclined to "concentrate on descriptions of people as individuals rather than on statements about the race as a whole" (3) is not applicable to the Latin American writers analysed here. For instance, the Countess of Merlin uses constant generalisations on the slaves and the Creoles to describe them in her travelogue and Soledad Acosta de Samper also makes general statements about the Moors in her text. Hence, this dissertation rather considers Latin American travel writing by women as differing from other travel writing, arising not from an essential quality of women, but

from their subject position in discourse, manifested, for example, in their lesser degree of involvement in politics, science or business.

Theories on autobiographical writing, such as those of Sidonie Smith, are not fully applicable to the travel texts analysed here, either. Since autobiographical texts are written by the author's present self about a past self, they are not comparable to travel texts which play on the illusion that the writing is contemporary with the trip. The epistolary technique used by the Countess of Merlin in her travel text, for instance, presses upon the reader the simultaneity of the writing with the event narrated.

Sidonie Smith, as does Sara Mills, realises the limits of her theorisation as she claims "its specificities only for texts in the Anglo-American tradition" (45). In the introduction to *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (co-edited with Julia Watson) the authors construct a marginal female autobiographer in relation to the "autobiographical subject", a white Christian western man of property (xvii), a view similar to Pratt's male travel writer. This marginality, however, opposes the specificity of the situation of Latin American women writers whose mere act of writing reveals the privileged position which they held. An alternative position might be to analyse the possibilities disclosed to women during certain times and spaces and under determined discursive conditions.

Thus, a historicisation of the genealogy through which women in Latin America specifically have been able to insert voices in male discourses opens other analytical possibilities. This is possible by recognising the heterogeneity of discourse. Latin American women travel writers are not simply marginalised *others* nor victims of colonialism and native and foreign patriarchy. This view constructs a singular monolithic subject submitted

to a top-bottom rigid structure of power. An alternative view of these writers and their works would have to look at their particular biographies to situate their particular voices in historical and geographical context. It is through a complex interplay of circumstances that their voices found gaps in the patriarchal/colonial or neo-colonial discourse to exercise their agency.

Those voices, however, are not necessarily “solidary” with a homogeneous “female cause” or “subversive” of the social structures --they sometimes adopted an apparently contradictory stance regarding their status as women.⁹ Hence, what emerges from a close reading of these travelogues is a complex and fluid interaction of discourses through which the author constructs a coherent self in the face of the displacement experience.

⁹ Elite women, for instance, would punish female slaves with great cruelty. Female slaves, in turn, would gossip or steal from their mistresses. By the same token, there were occasions in which sympathy between women from different social and racial groups arose. Also, there was a range of social networks (home, the Church) in which women from all races and social groups would participate (Socolow, 180).

CHAPTER II

Viaje a la Habana: a French-Cuban Aristocrat's Search for Identity

Pero ay! Nosotros tambien hemos surcado aquellos mares: nosotros hemos visto el nublado cielo de las Bermudas, y hemos oido bramar los inconstantes vientos de las Azores. Como la célebre escritora hemos abandonado la tierra de nuestra cuna; hemos emprendido uno de aquellos viajes solemnes (...)

[But alas! We have also sailed those seas: we have seen the cloudy sky of the Bahamas, and we have heard the inconstant winds of the Azores roar. Like the famous writer we have abandoned the land of our cradle; we have begun one of those solemn voyages (...)] (Merlin X)

María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo

Viaje a la Habana was published in 1844 in Madrid. The opening pages to this Spanish edition (the original work, *La Havane*, was written in French) are titled "Apuntes Biográficos de la Señora Condesa de Merlin" (Biographical notes on the Countess of Merlin). Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda who, like the author of the book, was a Cuban expatriate and writer, wrote these notes on the basis of their similar backgrounds.

Avellaneda left Cuba in her early 20's. She was, thus, able to identify with Merlin and she was conscious of what emigration entailed:

Nada, en efecto, es tan amargo como la expatriacion, y siempre hemos pensado como la gran escritora que juzgaba los viajes uno de los mas *tristes placeres* de la vida. ¿Qué pedirá el extranjero á aquella nueva sociedad, á la que llega sin ser llamado, y en la que nada encuentra que le recuerde una felicidad pasada, ni le presagie un placer futuro? ¿Cómo vivirá el corazon en aquella atmósfera sin amor? Existencia sin comienzo, espectáculo sin interés, detrás de sí unos días que nada tienen que ver con lo presente, delante otros que no encuentran apoyo en lo pasado, los recuerdos y las esperanzas divididos por un abismo, tal es la suerte del desterrado.

[Nothing, in fact, is as bitter as expatriation, and we have always thought like the great writer that judges voyages one of the most *sad pleasures* of life.

What will the stranger ask from that new society to which she arrives without being called and in which she finds nothing to remind her of a past happiness, nor a sign of a future pleasure? How will the heart live in that loveless environment?

Existence without beginning, spectacle without interest, behind, days that are unrelated to the present, in front, others which cannot find support in the past, memories and hopes divided by an abyss, such is the luck of the exiled.] (Merlin IX)

The Countess of Merlin also commented on the experience of migration, “¿Qué derecho mas sagrado que el de vivir en el suelo donde se ha nacido? La sola propiedad incontestable del hombre debe ser esta, la patria” [What right is more sacred than to live in the land where one is born? The sole undeniable property of man must be the *patria*] (12). This concern with the *patria* figures among the primary discursive elements in Merlin’s text and it is one of the most important in her construction of identity. The author, who is a migrant woman, uses several other discourses such as those of class and race to find a sense of belonging to her native land. This chapter will look at the discursive constructions used by the Countess of Merlin in her perceptions of nation, class, race and gender and how these are woven into her discourses of identity.

Born in Havana in 1789 María de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo, later Countess of Merlin, was the eldest child of Joaquín de Santa Cruz y Cárdenas (also Count of Jaruco) and María Teresa Montalvo y O’Farrill, one of the founding families of the Cuban sugar aristocracy (Méndez, *Gender and Nationalism* 20). As a child she was left in the care of the maternal grandmother while her parents left for Spain to establish business connections (Méndez, ‘Voyage to *La Havane*’ 81). Her mother never returned to Cuba, had three more children and gained prestige in the court of Madrid. When María de las Mercedes was nine years old her father returned to Havana and, worried about her unstructured education, put her in a convent. Thanks to the help of a nun she had befriended, she escaped the convent and, at age 12, travelled to Europe to join her family in Madrid. There she made

up for the lack of education by learning, among other things, music and singing, talents, which she practiced throughout her life.

On 31 October 1809, María de las Mercedes married Antoine Christophe Merlin, French general in José Bonaparte's army (Méndez, 'Journey' 709). Due to Bonaparte's fall, she was forced to leave Spain with her husband and firstborn daughter. In Paris, during the 1830s and 1840s, the Countess became famous in high society for housing a literary salon which was attended by Hugo, Lamartine, Musset and also by intellectuals of the Cuban high society such as Saco, Del Monte, and Luz y Caballero (Araújo 114).

In 1831, the Countess wrote her first book *Mes Premières Douzes Années*, an autobiographical account of her first twelve years of life in Cuba. After her husband's death, she returned to Cuba via the United States and arrived to Havana in June 1840 (Araújo 114). She stayed in Cuba only two months, and a year after her return to France, published an essay based on her observations in the popular *Revue des Deux Mondes* entitled "Observations de Madame la Comtesse de Merlin sur l'état des esclaves dans les colonies espagnoles" (Observations by the Countess of Merlin on the Conditions of Slaves in the Spanish Colonies) (Martin 39).¹ This text was to become Letter XX of the thirty-six letters that compose *La Havane*, which was published in 1844. Merlin spent the rest of her life in Paris and died in 1852.

¹ Most of Merlin's texts were first published in French. They include: *Mes Premières Douzes Années* (1831), *Histoire de la soeur Inés* (1832), *Souvenirs et Mémoires de Madame la Comtesse de Merlin: Souvenirs D'une Créole* (1836), *Les Loisirs d'une Femme du Monde* (1838), *Mémoires de Madame Malibran* (1840), "Observations de Madame la Comtesse de Merlin sur l'état des esclaves dans les colonies espagnoles" (1841), *Lola et María* (1845), *Les Lionnes de Paris* (1845), and *Le Duc d'Athènes* (1852) (Suarez 236).

Voyage to Havana

According to Adriana Méndez Rodenas, Merlin's trip to Cuba was motivated by both economic and sentimental reasons. Her trip was partly made to resolve "a dispute with her brother, Don Francisco Javier, who had inherited their father's title of Count of Mopox and Jaruco. The litigation involved the sale of the sugar mill at Nazareno and was resolved against the countess's interests" ('Journey' 727). The sentimental reasons were her desire to see the *patria* once more. As Nara Araújo writes in *Viajeras al Caribe*, the text itself was also part of her economic reasons:

Las motivaciones de *La Havane* fueron --en estrecha relación-- materiales y políticas. La Merlin, necesitaba de dinero --para mantener un tren de vida de joyas, coches y criados-- dotó a su obra de una carga política, sin duda, editorialmente atractiva para la época. Según parece, se trataba de hacer entre sus familiares y amigos una suscripción para la obra, con un precio por ejemplar bastante elevado.

[The motivations for *La Havane* were --in close relation-- material and political. Merlin needed money --to maintain a lifestyle of jewels, carriages and servants-- she gave her work a political load, no doubt editorially attractive for the period. It seems, it was a matter of raising a subscription for the work among her relatives and friends with a high price per copy.] (114)

Her immense popularity hence explains, at least partially, the six editions of *La Havane*, all published in 1844; the first in Paris, three in Brussels, one in The Hague and *Viaje a la Habana*, the Spanish edition (Araújo 114).

The original edition of this work includes thirty-six letters of which twelve narrate Merlin's visit to the United States. Fourteen of these letters include essays on her political opinions and criticism of the Spanish government and the way that it was running its colony. According to Méndez, "La Havane is a political treatise that argues in favor of maintaining Cuba's status as a Spanish colony, all the while dealing with pressing issues of the time such as slavery and the bureaucratic inefficiency of the Spanish regime and other colonial institutions" ('Journey' 710). There were sufficient reasons to edit out the political and

historical content of the work producing, thus, the ten-letter Spanish version that is *Viaje a La Habana*. Other reasons for editing these out were to protect the rest of the Montalvo family that lived in Cuba (Méndez, 'Journey' 711). The appendix, "containing letters on the slave situation in Cuba by the British consul, Mr. Turnbull, and by several influential Cubans," was not included either (Martin 39). The dedications to members of Merlin's family or to renowned Europeans that headed the letters in the French edition were also omitted (Méndez, 'Voyage to *La Havane*' 83). Clearly, *La Havane* contained politically sensitive material.

Along with the political essays that express her opinions and the observations of life in Havana, Merlin uses the works of other Cuban authors to illustrate Cuban life throughout her book. She does this without giving them any credit and is therefore accused of plagiarism by critics of her time and of ours. I will return to the topic of Merlin's "plagiarism" at the end of the chapter. For now, it is enough to know that her information on the customs of country life were mostly taken from sketches published in the newspapers *La cartera cubana* and *El Album* and they were written by Ramón de Palma, Cirilo Villaverde and José Victoriano Betancourt.²

In *Viaje a la Habana*, what remains of Merlin's book, less than a third of the original, is further limited by the existence of several of these "plagiarised" accounts. Even if such parts as the anecdote of José María, the *guajiro* (Letter VI), and the very long and novelised "Las Pascuas" (Letter IX) were not originally Merlin's work, their inclusion in the book is

² Merlin used Palma's novel *Una Pascua en San Marcos* (Easter in San Marcos) published in *El Album* (1838) in Letter IX of *Viaje a La Habana*. The unfinished story of José María, the *guajiro* in Letter VI is taken from Villaverde's *costumbrista* novel, *El guajiro* (Country folk). This, however, was not published until 1842. Since Merlin's voyage was in 1840, she could only have used a first draft that appeared anonymously as "Amorios y contratiempos de un guajiro" in *La cartera cubana* (1839). Betancourt's "Velar un mondongo" (Watching a pork roast) published in *La cartera cubana* (1838) was used in Letter VIII. See Méndez Rodenas "A Journey to the (Literary) Source: The Invention of Origins in Merlin's *Viaje a La Habana*".

indicative of her ideological intentions. Despite all this, *Viaje a la Habana* continues to be a representative amount of writing, which will suffice for a discourse analysis.

There are several recurring themes in *Viaje a la Habana*. The argument here is that these indicate some of the different discourses that appear in the author's writing. These themes are; first, the concern with the *patria*; second, Merlin's descriptions of the aristocracy to which she belongs; third, her commentaries on the black slaves; and finally the recurring use of adjectives such as "primitive", "rustic", and "innocent", among others, to relegate Cuban society to a mythical time. Each of these themes will lead to the recognition of the ways in which Merlin places herself in the discourses on nation, class, race, and gender, and thus, constructs her identity.

The *Patria* and God

Hace algunas horas que permanezco inmóvil, respirando á mas no poder el aire embalsamado que llega de aquella tierra bendecida de Dios.... Salud, isla la encantadora y virginal! Salud, hermosa *patria* mia! En los latidos de mi corazon, en el temblor de mis entrañas, conozco que ni la distancia, ni los años han podido entibiar mi primer amor. Te amo, y no podria decirte por qué; te amo sin preguntar la causa, como la madre ama á su hijo, y el hijo ama á su madre; te amo sin darme, y sin querer darme cuenta de ello, por el temor de disminuir mi dicha..... Cuando respiro este soplo perfumado que tú envías, y lo siento resbalar dulcemente por mi cabeza, me estremezco hasta la médula de los huesos, y creo sentir la tierna impresion del beso maternal.

[I have remained motionless for some hours, breathing the perfumed air that arrives from that land blessed by God.... Hail, enchanting and virginal island! Hail, beautiful *patria* of mine! In the beating of my heart, in the tremor of my core, I acknowledge that not even distance or the years have been able to temper my first love. I love you and I cannot tell you why; I love you without asking the reason, like the mother loves her son and the son loves his mother; I love you without realising it and without wanting to realise it because of the fear of diminishing my bliss.... When I inhale this perfumed breath of wind that you send, and I feel it slide sweetly by my head, I tremble to the bone marrow and I think that I feel the tender impression of the maternal kiss.] (Merlin 2)

In this first letter of *Viaje a la Habana*, the Countess of Merlin narrates her arrival in Cuba using the Romantic language that is typical of the book and of the period in which she is writing. “Invoking the primal world of Europe’s rhapsodic arrival discourse on América”, a discourse which has been used since Columbus (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 174), Merlin proclaims her love of Cuba, the place where she was born, and where she lived until the age of 12.

As Pratt argues in her *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, writings by European travellers-scientists (and especially Humboldt) reinvented America for the European readers and they did so by evoking it as primal nature (120-129). Merlin employs this strategy in her description of nature, which clearly echoes the trope of “primal world”.

Notice the way nature is represented in the following:

Estoy encantada! Desde esta mañana respiro el aire tibio y amoroso de los Trópicos, este aire de vida y de entusiasmo, lleno de inexplicables deleites! El sol, las estrellas, la bóveda etérea, todo me parece mas grande, mas diáfano, mas espléndido! Las nubes no se mantienen en las alturas del cielo, sino se pasean en el aire, cerca de nuestras cabezas, con todos los colores del iris; y la atmósfera está tan clara, tan brillante, que parece sembrada de un polvo menudísimo de oro!

[I am enchanted! Since this morning I breathe the warm and amorous breeze of the Tropics, this lively and enthusiastic air, full of inexplicable delights! The sun, the stars, the celestial sphere, everything seems bigger, more diaphanous, more splendid! The clouds do not remain in the heights of the sky, but pass in the air near to our heads, with all the colours of the rainbow; and the atmosphere is so clear and brilliant that it seems covered in minute golden dust!] (Merlin 1)

Merlin describes the air as warm and loving; the air of life and enthusiasm; everything seems bigger to her; the atmosphere is so brilliant it seems to be golden. Purposefully exaggerating these elements of nature to achieve this “rhapsodic” arrival, she engages her readers in the discourse on the purity of nature to describe a place that she has not seen in close to forty years. Though she has written about her childhood there and has probably read other Cuban authors, as well as other writings about Cuba, the fact is that she has not seen her *patria* as an adult. For this reason, she has to establish this land as hers not only

for her readers but for herself as well. Hence, her concern with nature, with her *patria*, and with God, is the way she copes with this lack of complete belonging to the island. It is also important that this particular type of “landscape description”, according to Mills, “becomes an opportunity to align the narrator with the feminine position of religious feeling” (Mills, *Discourses of Difference* 182) and this religious feeling is the next recurring convention used by Merlin in her arrival discourse.

Her imagery of nature, upon arrival in Cuba, is annexed to a set of images connected to religion and spirituality. She describes this arrival, this great moment in her life, as accompanied by a feeling of “religioso reconocimiento” (religious recognition), and “un extásis embriagador y divino” (an intoxicating and divine ecstasy) (Merlin 2-3), which gives the experience a mystical quality that reminds the reader of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. The spiritual language continues:

Las lágrimas humedecían mis párpados; mi alma se elevaba á Dios, y todo cuanto hay de bueno y de bello en la naturaleza moral del hombre aparecía á mis ojos como un objeto infinito de mi ambicion. Me parecia que sin esta belleza interior no era yo digna de contemplar tanta magnificencia. Un ardiente deseo de perfeccion se apoderaba de mí, se mezclaba al sentimiento de mi miseria, é inclinando mi frente en el polvo, ofrecia á Dios mi buena voluntad como el modesto holocausto de una criatura débil y limitada.

[Teardrops moistened my eyelids; my soul rose to God, and all that is good and beautiful in the moral nature of man appeared before my eyes as an infinite object of my ambition. It seemed to me that without this inner beauty I was not worthy of contemplating such magnificence. An ardent desire for perfection seized me, mixed with my feeling of misery, and leaning my forehead on the dust, I offered my good will to God as the modest sacrifice of a weak and limited creature.] (Merlin 3)

Merlin constantly refers to the *patria* and to God. She gives Him thanks for having allowed her to see her island again, “Cuátas [sic] gracias doy á Dios por haberme conducido al través del Océano á dos mil leguas de mis hogares, para saludar una vez todavía la tierra que me ha visto nacer!” [How I give thanks to God for having driven me two thousand leagues from my home, through the ocean, to greet once again, the land in which I was

born!] (10). This religious discourse serves the Countess' narration in various ways. First, as a literary convention it displays, and so do the descriptions of nature, the spiritualist aesthetics of Romanticism, which she uses to justify her authority as a literary figure. As Susan Kirkpatrick argued, Romanticism gave women a space for expression by providing them with a subjectivity in which spheres like family (whose core is typically the mother) and nation (constructed by males) can coexist (in Szurmuk 83).

Second, the discourse of spirituality complements the discourse of femininity, available to women at that time, allowed the Countess to set the audience at ease by confirming that she will not violate the norms that society has established for her. Mills notes that discourses of femininity limited women to "a range of roles, largely situated within the private sphere. 'Feminine' women concerned themselves with their families and maintaining relationships, but also tended to the spiritual and moral well being of the family group" (*Discourses of Difference* 94). Merlin then assumes with this religious self-effacement the position of "a weak and limited creature", that is, a non-transgressive role. As Molloy puts it "the fact that the Condesa is a woman, more visible socially than intellectually, surely accounts for this self-deprecating pose, not infrequent in intelligent woman of means whose education has been neglected and who, one day, discover their literary vocation in a male-oriented literary scene" (87).

The fact is that by writing and performing, as well as housing a famous literary salon, Merlin, sanctioned by her privileged position in the aristocracy, had already transgressed the sphere of the private in which women were traditionally constrained. However, she transgresses it further by writing about subjects that a woman was not supposed to touch; that is, writing about politics (including the delicate question of slavery) and economy. These were "unfeminine" subjects as the following example clearly illustrates, "when a

publisher asked Sydney, Lady Morgan to write on Italy, they asked her to write on ‘morals and manners’, whilst her husband was to write on the laws and government institutions” (Mills, *Discourses of Difference* 95).

Despite these constraints, women situated in hierarchical positions on the social ladder, such as Merlin, were able to insert their voice in fields like the literary and comment on subjects deemed “masculine”. The recourse to spiritual language by Merlin was then another means to situate her voice in a feminine discourse and give it (moral) authority. Women were limited to the private and the religious, but by claiming her morals and her spirituality as impeccable Merlin could then speak with an authoritative voice. Mills explains it this way:

(...) in producing accounts of this kind, the writer constructs herself as a devout subject, i.e., as a conforming member of a religious group, and this is already a position of some strength within the society she lived where only ‘good’ (i.e., obedient and devout) female subjects were revered (...) it is possible to bring oneself and one’s actions into alignment with God and hence a position of strength. These autobiographical writings align the subject with the power of God, through displaying herself as the object of God’s mercy (*Discourse* 84).

Merlin establishes in this way a position of authority from which to speak. Since Cuba is a land “blessed by God” and since she is offering her “good will to God”, and her soul rises to meet God upon her arrival, Merlin is also expressing her devout intentions towards Cuba. By equating the *patria* as something holy and herself as devout, she is also claiming her belonging to this *patria*. She has no need to do this for her audience in France, since the French already know her as “une créole”, as the title of her other major work reveals.³ Merlin is claiming unity with her place of origin, by asking Cuba and the Cubans for re-entry into society, but ultimately, whether they accept her or not, she is claiming this unity for herself.

³ *Souvenirs et Mémoires de Madame la Comtesse de Merlin: Souvenirs D’une Créole.*

The reader discovers quickly, however, that Merlin's discourse on the *patria* clashes with her other discourses, and that this conflict is a constant throughout the text. Cuba is not her home as she had to leave her "hogares" (homes) (10) in order to visit the island. She loves it and identifies with it but soon she has to admit the obvious contradiction, "El corazon se me oprime, hija mia, al pensar que vengo aqui como una extranjera" [My heart is oppressed, dear daughter, to think I come here as a stranger] (10). Merlin soon realises she is a stranger in her native land. As a stranger, then, she does not hesitate in describing those things which are different from her homeland France. The Countess starts to compare, to differentiate, to *other*, and she does this throughout the text using the conventional colonial discourses that we will see below.

The Creole Aristocracy

At the beginning of Merlin's account, before she supposedly sets foot off the ship that has brought her to Cuba, she is quick to inform the reader of her place in the social hierarchy; "Hé nos aquí enfrente de la ciudad de *Santa Cruz*, que recibió su nombre de mis antepasados" [Here we are in front of the city of *Santa Cruz*, which received its name from my ancestors]. On that same page she adds, "-Es la ciudad de *Jaruco*, á la cual vá unido el titulo primitivo de mi familia. Mi hermano es justicia mayor de la ciudad (...)" [It is the city of *Jaruco*, the primitive title of my family is annexed to it. My brother is the mayor of the city (...)] (6, emphasis in the original). The author belongs to the highest rung of the social ladder, the aristocracy. Her ancestors named the cities of Cuba. She comes from the purebred blood of the Spanish colonisers. Throughout the book Merlin's incessant observations on the customs of her class, in comparison to those of the middle and lower classes, display her huge concern with class identity. This discourse on class is yet another way for the Countess to establish her identity, a way which has less conflict for her than

the concern with the *patria*. She not only belongs to the highest Creole society, she is also, a French countess.

In *Viaje a la Habana*, Merlin's description of the customs of the aristocracy, the few instances where she has actually been a witness, relies almost entirely on the customs of her family. She begins by describing them as having, "facciones finas, mirada expresiva y maneras nobles" [fine features, expressive look and noble manner] and also "nótabase un aire de finura y delicadeza en todas sus personas" [you could notice an air of refinement and delicacy in all of them] (12). She uses adjectives such as "fine", "delicate", "noble", "expressive"; words that make a stark contrast to the ones she uses to describe lower social classes. All her language works to create an aristocracy that is noble, pure and civilised and so stands out from the rest of the classes. For example, a relative narrated a wake in a mocking way, for Merlin, and then he explained that it is a custom of the middle class, "que nada tiene que ver con las clases aristocráticas" [that has nothing to do with the aristocracy] (64). A custom of the *clase rústica*, the country folk, is also described using words such as "vulgar" and "grotesque" (Merlin 65).

Merlin refers to the houses of the middle class and then to the houses of the aristocracy, clearly separating the two so they are not confused (8-9). Her uncle's house is just big enough to fit his huge family, "por grande que sea la casa de mi tío, apenas bastará con su familia y sus criados; tiene diez hijos, otros tantos nietos, y mas de cien negros para su servicio" [as big as my uncle's house is, it is just enough for his family and his servants; he has ten sons, just as many grandchildren, and more than one hundred Negroes at his service] (16). Proof of her family's wealth is their French cook, which every wealthy family has. On the first day of her arrival, her aunt serves her a French dish, and she explains, "no, no me gusta; no he venido aqui sino para comer platos criollos" [no, I don't like it; I

have only come here to eat Creole dishes] (16). Her refusal of the French dish for a Creole one is another attempt at acceptance by the Cubans; by preferring Creole food she asks to be identified as Creole. The discourses that shape her text, however, achieve the contrary; they produce a French Countess marking the contrasts between her civilised nation and the barbarous colony that is her *patria*. Nevertheless, her discourse on class is the one instance where she can come close to identity with the *criollo* aristocracy.

The notion of *patria* is encountered again in Merlin's description of her uncle, the great patriarch of the family. She uses all the flattery that she can in this instance:

Mi tío es un excelente sugeto, amante de su país con pasión, y de una bondad inexplicable; su filantropía no se limita solamente á los que le rodean, sino que se extiende á todos los desgraciados. Sumamente instruido en fisiología y en medicina, cura un gran número de enfermedades, y no se limita á sus hijos y á sus esclavos, sino que como su ciencia es en cierta manera venerada, y es fama que ha hecho curas maravillosas, lo llaman de todas partes. Es tanta la humanidad de su corazón, que en medio de lo [sic] criados que reclama su casa donde tiene que velar sobre ochocientos esclavos, y á pesar del gran número de negocios públicos que le ocupan, toda vez que un pobre enfermo reclame sus asistencia, corre á prestarle sus auxilios y sus socorros, aunque sea en mitad de la noche.

[My uncle is an excellent individual, a passionate lover of his country, and with an inexplicable kindness; his philanthropy is not limited to the ones that surround him, but it extends to all the unfortunate. Highly instructed in physiology and medicine, he heals a great deal of illnesses, and does not limit himself to his sons and slaves, since his science is in a way worshipped, and he is famous for his marvellous cures, he is called from everywhere. The humanity of his heart is so great that, between the servants required in his house where he has to watch over eight hundred slaves, and despite the great number of public matters that occupy him, each time that a poor sick person claims his assistance, he runs to lend him his help and his aid, even in the middle of the night.] (16)

According to Merlin her uncle is most admirable when it comes to the well being of his *patria*. He is member or president of most of the commissions that have been founded to increase the prosperity of the island: "Siempre es el primero cuando se trata de estimular un descubrimiento, de dar impulso á algun proyecto útil al país" [He is always the first to

stimulate a discovery, to prompt any useful project for the country] (17).⁴ Merlin seeks, with this description of a righteous uncle, a civic hero, a master loved by all including his slaves, to prove the moral standing of the family she belongs to. Thus, identifying with this class also helps her to establish a moral platform from which to speak.

This is most evident in her descriptions of the women in her family since her discourse on class colludes with discourses of femininity, where religious references abound; Merlin begins by describing her aunt as “una santa mujer” (a saintly woman), saintly because she sends delicacies from her own table to her old and sick slaves (17). Her female cousins, “aquellas interesantes muchachas, imágenes vivas de la caridad” [those interesting girls, living images of charity], encouraged by a “beneficent hope”, prepare, with their “white” and “delicate” hands, the medicine that their father has taught them to make and apply (16-17). However, the great admiration that Merlin expresses for her uncle who is a philanthropist, a scientist, and a great politician can only be expressed towards the women in the family in terms of their religious and moral righteousness. In other words, her admiration can only be expressed towards the feminine values which the women of her family and of her social status are supposed to follow. Nevertheless, other Creole women - those outside Merlin’s social class-- are described similarly but with a curious twist; they are not “fine” or “interesting” but just “simple” and “natural”:

El carácter sencillo de las criollas presta á su trato un atractivo indecible; todo es natural en ellas, y se las vé envejecer sin apercibirse de ello, y sin que la pérdida de sus encantos afecte vuestro cariño. Jamás se les ha ocurrido teñirse las canas, ni ocultar una arruga. Esta pureza de alma, esta abnegacion voluntaria no solo las hace mas amables, sino que prolonga su juventud, y las hace amar á pesar de los años.

⁴ Cuba, however, was not yet a free nation. It was one of the last Spanish colonies to achieve independence, in 1898. Although Merlin was against the independence of Cuba since it conflicted with her social and economic standing, there was already an intellectual elite considering the idea of independence. Thus the Cuban national identity was also being born. For a discussion of Merlin and the Cuban national identity see Méndez Rodenas, “Voyage to La Havane: The Countess of Merlin’s Preview of National Identity”.

[The simple nature of the Creole women lends them an unutterable charm; everything is natural in them, and you see them get older without perceiving it, and without the loss of their charms affecting your affection. It has never occurred to them to dye their white hair, or to hide a wrinkle. This purity of the soul, this self-sacrifice doesn't just make them more kind, but prolongs their youth and makes them love despite the years.] (Merlin 18)

These classic conventions of the discourse of femininity (the women's souls are pure, they are self-sacrificing and kind) are mixed with colonial discourses; the Creole women are simple and natural in contrast to the sophistication of European women; they do not age, and, thus, they are infantilised.

This notion of femininity as pure, kind and natural recurs in the text when Merlin describes the heroine of the story in Letter IX. This young lady, "habia apenas salido de la infancia, y era todavia la obra purísima de la naturaleza" [had just left childhood, and was still the most pure work of nature]. She was not "cunning", but "candid" and "innocent". With a "simple" and "limited", although good, education, she was also "tender" and "passionate", such as all "Creole souls" are, and could only defend herself with the "instinctive sincerity" that "nature" has put in the "hearts of women" (72). The references to "chivalric romances", to "heroines of the Middle Ages" (87), and to "violent and romantic passion" (90) that are found in this narration are also part of the colonial discourses of Merlin which will be analysed later. Furthermore, her concern with the purity, simplicity, innocence and passion of the characters of the story also conform to her discourses of femininity.

The discourse of femininity is informed by yet another discourse that was in circulation for nineteenth-century women, the discourse of philanthropy. Mills states:

Thomson suggests that because middle- and upper class women were largely forbidden from taking up full-time, paid employment, they could nevertheless gain a sense of worth-while work, affirm themselves in their feminine and religious role

and gain a sense of power through dispensing help to others lower down in the social scale. (*Discourses of Difference* 97)

The philanthropic discourse that describes the women in Merlin's family, (interestingly, the uncle is also described as a philanthropist), is also indicative of their social standing and of their morality and by association of Merlin's. Although Merlin does not practice philanthropy directly, one gets the sense that her writing, though it may also serve her economic ambitions, is the medium by which she tries to help her *patria*. Though it may seem counterproductive, by criticising her island and its lack of civilisation Merlin tries, and this is evident in her political letters in the original work, to formulate solutions to the various problems that the island faces. This is undeniably enmeshed in the "discourse of savagery" (Mills, *Discourses of Difference* 87) whereby, with the exception of the aristocracy, she produces an uncivilised Cuba in need of European civilisation thus justifying her belief that Cuba should remain a Spanish colony. Both Mills and Pratt agree that representations of this kind provided the justification for colonialism and the "civilised" European nations could intervene in the "savage" colonies (Mills, *Discourse* 108; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 149).

It is, therefore, imperative for Merlin to separate the aristocracy, her own class, which comes from direct European descent --and so displays *pureza de sangre* (purity of blood)-- from the rest of Cuban society. When she is not writing about her social class and is describing the rest of Creoles, slaves or *guajiros*, her language changes completely and her adjectives are mostly negative; she assumes the "discourse of savagery" without hesitation, as we will see in the next two sections.

Merlin and Slavery

Entitled “A Mes Compatriots”, the introductory section of Merlin’s original work, *La Havane*, is a “nostalgic dedication which Merlin directs to her compatriots back home” (Méndez ‘Journey’ 727). This dedication is preceded by another one: “A Son Excellence le Capitaine-Général O’Donnell, Gouverneur-Général de Cuba” (Méndez ‘Journey’ 727). While the second dedication is an attempt to reinsert herself into Cuban culture and society, the Countess achieves the contrary with the first one. The dedication to the governor of Cuba clashes directly with her compatriots’ interests since Captain-General O’Donnell was hated by the Cubans for leading the infamous *Conspiración de la Escalera* (conspiracy of the ladder) in which freed blacks and mulattoes were arrested and tortured.⁵

This textual inconsistency serves to highlight the contradictions that are evident in Merlin’s discourses on race. As mentioned in the section on the *patria*, conflictive discourses are a constant element throughout Merlin’s work. Mills argues that texts are often constructed by several discourses that conflict with each other. Moreover, she notes that this is specially the case for women’s travel writing and adds, “this resulted in texts which are far from cohesive and which are fractured by these disjunctions” (*Discourse* 100).

Merlin’s position on the topic of slavery is as conflictive as it is complex. Since she belongs to the aristocracy, whose wealth was achieved through the sugar production business dependant on slavery, she cannot fully adopt the Romantic and “enlightened” ideals of

⁵ According to Méndez (Journey 730), Robert L. Paquette’s *Sugar is Made with Blood: the Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* documents O’Donnell’s intention to eliminate freed blacks and mulattoes as a whole. Paquette concludes in his study that this conspiracy existed as several conspiracies between 1841 and 1844.

fraternity and equality that her contemporaries were espousing (note that Merlin was born the year of the French Revolution). Claire Emilie Martin claims that:

She [Merlin] boldly confronts her readership by stating what would become her main argument: “Nothing is more just than the abolition of the slave trade; nothing is more unjust than the emancipation of the slaves” (2). She bases her assertion on the principle of freedom and natural law. While the slave trade is an attack against natural law, the emancipation of slaves would constitute a violation of property rights. (40)

Furthermore, the same author notes that “[t]he terror and utter paranoia that pervaded the 1830s and 1840s in Cuba point to the delicate balance that the Spanish government had to strike between a protectionist position toward the colony and the implementation of the slave trade laws of 1835. These laws were considered unjust and an offence to the autonomy of the Spanish monarchy” (45). By 1835, due to the pressures applied by abolitionist Britain, countries such as France, the United States, and the Netherlands had prohibited the slave trade and were expecting Spain and Portugal to follow.⁶

Although the Countess is against the slave trade, she claims that the Negroes are better off in slavery than in Africa where their own people eat them. Hence, it is understandable that Merlin, who considered the total abolition of slavery an infringement of property rights, struggled to justify it. She claims, for instance, that the Negroes cannot fare for themselves if they are freed, that they prefer slavery and that they love their benevolent masters and that the slaves in Cuba are far better off than in British or French colonies (Martin 40-43). Furthermore, Merlin, probably sensing the inevitability of the abolition of slavery, proposes a solution. She believes that if the Spanish government observed the prohibition of the slave trade and increased the immigration of white Europeans the transition from

⁶ See Seymour Drescher’s *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective*.

slavery to paid workers would be done easily and without economic repercussions (Araújo 115) enforcing once again the idea that Cuba needs Europe's civilising mission.⁷

The Countess not only contradicts herself in her political ideas, but she also comes into conflict with some sectors of the Cuban intellectual elite, particularly the Del Monte group, the literati whose acceptance she sought as this would indicate her acceptance in the island's cultural scene. The Del Monte group was started by Domingo del Monte in 1835 as a literary salon (Méndez, 'Journey' 713) along with other intellectuals such as Luz y Caballero and Saco. This group led the reformist ideas of the Cuban elite who sought to become independent from the slave traders and the saccharocracy (Méndez, 'Journey' 714). Although the group supported Merlin and her writing, it did not fully trust her since she came from the class that they were trying to move away from (Araújo 113).

This brief summary of the Countess' ideas on slavery, as analysed by Martin, Araújo, and Méndez in *La Havane*, is meant as a background from which to look at her discourse as evident in the Spanish edition of the work. Although this edition does not deal with the topic of slavery directly, the few times Merlin mentions the slaves she displays the conventional discourse on race: by constantly using possessives and diminutives such as "mi negrito" (55), and "mi negrilla" (27), she adopts a paternalistic stance while representing the slaves as always happy -happy to serve, happy to be slaves. This claim is ironic in view of the fact that the slaves run away and that the following methods to retrieve them are necessary:

La raza canina de Cuba es única por su fuerza, por su inteligencia, y por su increíble aversión á los negros cimarrones. Cuando se deserta un esclavo, conduce el mayoral un perro al bujío ó cabaña del fugitivo, y aplica á las narices del mastin cualquiera de las prendas del negro. A veces suele trabarse un combate entre el

⁷ The idea of European immigration to "whiten" the race was not uncommon among intellectuals in the independent Latin American nations, like Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 193).

negro y el perro; este último lleva siempre la ventaja, y aunque sea herido, no suelta su presa.

[The canine breed of Cuba is unique for its strength, for its intelligence, and for its incredible aversion to the black runaway slaves. When a slave deserts, the foreman takes a dog to the *bujio* or fugitive's cabin, and applies any of the Negro's clothes to the nose of the mastiff. Sometimes the Negro and the dog struggle; but the latter is always at an advantage and even if it is hurt it does not let go of his prize.] (Merlin 24)

It is also ironic that it is her "saintly" aunt, who is so kind to her slaves, who describes this method of hunting down a run-away slave with brutal detail and in a way that reveals her pride in the unique breed of dogs of her island. Merlin's claims of benevolence from the masters to the slaves sound ludicrous after this.

As in life, so in literature, the slaves in Merlin's text exist only to serve and to amuse. They do not even have a life of their own as she reveals in a description of a sick girl playing with her slave as she would with a toy; the girl "tomaba entre las manos la cabeza de la negra, jugaba con ella y le daba suaves palmadas en la cara" [took the Negro's head between her hands, played with it and gave her soft slaps on the face]. She played mechanically with the ivory beads of a rosary that hung from the slave's neck. Merlin goes on to say that the slave "parecia no vivir sino de la vida de su ama" [seemed not to live but from her master's life] (49). Merlin then describes the death of the girl and how much the slave wept. The slave is represented as docile and passive. She cannot refuse to be used as a toy since she only has a life because of her master. When her master dies, the slave weeps for the loss of her own life. This ultimately reveals the power of the masters over the slaves' lives as well as Merlin's attitude towards these slaves and their masters.

Her depiction of the life of the Negroes also provides insights into her construction of race. For instance, on Merlin's arrival to the island she is greeted by, "negros medio desnudos, que conducen innumerables barquichuelos, y gritan, fuman, y nos enseñan sus

dientes en señal de contento, para darnos la bienvenida” [semi-nude Negroes, that drive countless small boats, and scream, smoke, and show us their teeth as a sign of happiness to welcome us]. Then the black men and the mulattos, “todos sudan con el calor, y sin embargo todos se muestran listos y serviciales” [all sweat with the heat and yet they are all ready and serviceable] (Merlin 11). This readiness to serve is later contradicted. The “saintly” aunt described by Merlin never scolds her slaves and instead allows them to be lazy and negligent. The slaves are infantilised in the description; just like children, they lie all day on the floor singing, talking and combing each other (Merlin 17). Since they work very little, only at meal times, they are also represented as lazy and negligent. Merlin’s text is fractured by these discursive contradictions; the slaves are content to be slaves, but they run away; they are serviceable but are also lazy; the masters are benevolent but they hunt their run-away slaves as animals.

Even in the instances when the Countess attempts a humane and compassionate representation of the slaves, she always achieves the contrary effect. When Merlin plays the piano all the black women in the house become her audience, an audience she appreciates, “Dirás que es el auditorio mas estúpido del mundo; pero sin embargo no deja de hacerme un honor, y sus gestos y sus puras demostraciones no se parecen á ningunas otras. Los negros aman la música con pasión, y tienen canciones que cantan con una interesante sencillez” [You will say that it is the most stupid audience in the world; but nevertheless I am honoured, and their gestures and pure demonstrations are like no other. The Negroes love music with a passion, and they have songs which they sing with an interesting simplicity] (28). She tries to describe them in a favourable way; they, like the Countess, love music, but since they are stupid they can only love it by instinct not through a real understanding of music. There is another reference to music when Merlin describes the music and the dances of the *guajiros*, the country folk. Their dance is “simple”

yet “passionate”, as are their lives, and their music, “carece del acorde mayor y del acorde relativo” [lack a major and a relative chord] (Merlin 39). Although, because she has studied music, she can appreciate the primitive efforts at making music of both the slaves and the *guajiros*, their music could never be as sophisticated as European music.

The following recollection of childhood is another attempt to demonstrate her sympathy for the slaves:

(...) me parece estar viendo á mi negrilla Catalina acariciándome para dormirme, cantando ó contándome por la centésima vez de qué modo la habia engañado su madre para venderla á unos mercaderes blancos, cuanta habia sido su alegría al reconocer á su hermano en el buque, las lágrimas que derramó cuando la vendieron sin su hermano; y entonces volvía á llorar, y yo en lugar de dormirme me sentaba en la cama y lloraba tambien.

[(...) I think I see my little Negro Catalina caressing me to sleep, singing or telling me for the hundredth time the way she had been deceived by her mother in order to sell her to some white merchants, how great her happiness had been when she recognised her brother on the ship, the tears she shed when they sold her without her brother; and she would cry again, and I, instead of sleeping would sit in the bed and also cry.] (27)

When this passage is read in relation to those discussed, what is understood then, is that the author as a child, who cried upon hearing this bedtime story, was sympathetic to the slaves, but that as an adult, the complexity of her role in the social hierarchy made her see this sympathy under another light. Hence, Merlin justifies slavery in many ways one of which is to claim that the slaves in Cuba enjoy privileges they have nowhere else. For example, she explains her pride in the humanity of her compatriots because, “en otras colonias (...) los negros tienen una iglesia especial, y como maldecia. Entre nosotros las generaciones desaparecen ante la religión, y la casa de Dios es la casa de todos” [in other colonies (...) blacks go to a special church that is almost cursed. Among us the species disappear before religion, and the house of God is the house of all] (57).

Yet, this religious discourse of equality also sounds hollow after all her other views of the Negroes. In some instances, Merlin even depicts them as not being humans, as in the passage where she describes the funerals in Havana, where the slaves are dressed in livery as an entertaining spectacle:

Ahora bien, como los negros en su vida ordinaria andan tan ligeramente vestidos, que sus hombros apenas estan acostumbrados al peso de una camisa, cuando se ven engalanados con estos vestidos de paño, todos bordados de galones y con la cabeza cubierta con un sombrero de tres picos; cuando en lugar de los anchos pantalones de lienzo se encuentran metidos en aquellos calzones de paño, jadean y soplan como cetáceos; se desabotonan las casacas; se suben las mangas hasta el codo; mueven los hombros como para desembarazarse de aquel peso, y para completar la caricatura, sus sombreros conservan apenas el equilibrio para no caérseles de la cabeza.

[Given that, the Negroes in their daily life dress so lightly, that their shoulders are hardly used to the weight of a shirt, when they find themselves decorated in these wool suits, all embroidered in galloon and with the head covered by a three-cornered hat; when instead of the wide cotton pants they find themselves inside those woollen breeches, they pant and blow like cetacean; they unbutton the dress coat; they pull their sleeves to the elbow; they move their shoulders as if to get rid of the weight, and to complete the caricature, their hats maintain just enough balance so as not to fall of their heads.] (Merlin 51)

Even though she is trying to explain the position of the slaves sympathetically, by explaining the reason for their discomfort, in the description the slaves are not even human; they are represented as animals that pant and blow or as a caricature. Merlin establishes her racial superiority through her confirmation that the slaves are primitive, stupid, and animal-like. Though there are attempts to present a humane point of view, she does not manage to give the slaves a voice, because the only possible voice is hers: her racially and socially superior voice.

The Countess Encounters *Her Primitive Others*

After many glorious descriptions of Cuba and after she has declared her love for the *patria*, Merlin begins to find differences with Europe: “Las costumbres activas de Europa, los

recursos que ofrece para todo la civilizacion del antiguo mundo, me faltan completamente aqui” [The active customs of Europe, the resources that it offers to all the civilisation of the old world, are completely lacking here] (19). Cuba, compared to Europe and particularly to France, lacks civilisation. Merlin introduces Letter VIII in the following way:

Seguidme, querida vizcondesa, vos cuya originalidad no ha perdido nada de su frescura y de su gracia en medio de *las elegancias parisienses*, y de las exigencias de *la vida civilizada*. Venid á un lugar *desconocido* y singular á preseñiar *el espectáculo* de unas costumbres que *nunca han sido descritas, ni apenas observadas*. No se han extinguido bastante nuestras ilusiones para que no se despierten de nuevo á vista de *unos seres que conservan aun todo el encanto de la sociedad primitiva*.

[Follow me, dear viscountess, you whose originality has not lost any of its freshness and grace among *Parisian elegance* and the demands of the *civilised life*. Come to an *unknown* and remarkable place to behold *the spectacle* of customs that *have never been described, nor hardly observed*. Our hopes have not been sufficiently extinguished that they are not awakened anew by the sight of *beings which still maintain all the charm of the primitive society*.] (59-60, emphasis mine)

She is inviting a Parisian woman, who lives the civilised life of Europe, to come, metaphorically through the narrative, to this world to observe this enchanting, primitive society, a society which has never been described and which remains unknown -- that is, unknown to Europe. Despite Merlin's efforts to identify with the island, the discourse she uses to describe Cuba and the Cuban people reveals inevitably stronger ties to France and to the European discourse for classifying the non-European world.

As both Mills and Pratt have aptly proved, European imperialism created the necessary discourse to justify intervention in the 'non-civilised' rest of the world. Joanna de Groot argues that this discourse circulated among writers, artists, travellers and scholars, in fiction and non-fiction as well as in art. There was no clear distinction between "observed or imagined reality", in other words, travellers, "drew not just on their actual observations, but on concepts, images, and quotations taken from fellow French or British writers, to describe and explain their experiences" (De Groot 101). De Groot also notes, "A Frenchman like Lamartine could characterize the people he saw on his visit to the

provinces of the Ottoman Empire as ‘nations without territory, *patrie*, rights, laws or security...waiting anxiously for the shelter’ of European occupation” (De Groot 98). Coincidentally, two of the writers mentioned in De Groot’s study, Lamartine and Hugo, authors of *Voyage en Orient* (1835-87) and *Les Orientals* (1829) respectively (De Groot 125), frequented the Countess of Merlin’s literary salon (Araújo 114). Hence, Merlin was well acquainted with the discourses of imperialism circulating during her life and this can be seen clearly in her text. This section of the chapter aims to highlight the ways in which Merlin participates in this colonial discourse, a participation that appears at odds with her desire to claim Cuba as *patria*.

According to Mills, there are several strategies used in colonial discourses to reduce the “natives” to a sub-human or childlike species. Some of these include making generalisations about the other nation, making valorised statements, and fixing them in an unchanging past or present tense (*Discourses of Difference* 48-49). For Mills, “Value-laden statements about the inhabitants of colonised countries were presented as ‘facts’ against which there was little possibility of argument” and she adds, “The fact that sweeping generalisations were made about particular cultures made them less communities of individuals than an indistinguishable mass, about whom one could amass ‘knowledge’ or which could be stereotyped” (*Discourse* 109). This is the type of knowledge that Merlin’s text collects for her European contemporaries. Consider the following: “...este pais apenas conocido en Europa, y que merece por mas de un título la atencion de los hombres de estado y de los observadores. Tenemos aquí mas riquezas naturales que riquezas adquiridas á costa del trabajo y de la perseverancia. Faltan estímulos á nuestros conciudadanos y monumentos á nuestra historia” [...this country hardly known in Europe, and that deserves more than just a token interest from statesmen and observers. We have here more natural wealth than wealth acquired by work and perseverance. Our fellow citizens lack stimuli

and our monuments lack history] (Merlin 31). Merlin invites Europeans, once again, this time not just metaphorically, to come to observe, to produce knowledge about the island and to bring the stimuli that her fellow citizens lack.

To Merlin, the “virginal island”, covered in “virginal forests” (3), was “discovered” by conquistadors she evidently venerates.⁸ She states, “(...) creo ver las s6mbras de aquellos grandes guerreros, de aquellos hombres de voluntad y energia, compa1eros de Col3n y de Velazquez, creo verlos orgullosos de su mas bello descubrimiento inclinarse de gratitud ante el Océano, y darle gracias por tan magnífico presente” [(...) I think I see the shadows of those great warriors, of those men of willpower and energy, Columbus’ and Velazquez’ companions, I think I see them proud of their most beautiful discovery bending from gratitude to the ocean, and thanking it for such a magnificent gift] (3). Merlin wishes, like those men, to “rediscover” this virginal land, to observe it, to describe it, and to make it known to Europeans so that they may bring civilisation to it. At this point, Merlin assumes a masculine voice in order to participate in the discourse of imperialism and colonialism in contrast with the feminine *patria*. By constantly referring to the natural resources that are obviously under-used and emphasising the island’s potential for colonial exploitation, she is extending an invitation like “a travel brochure to lure Europeans to invest and work in the island” (Martin 43). The local lassitude is opposed to European energy and therefore, justifies exploitation; since Europe has been given a gift --America-- exploitation is not an act of conquest. Moreover, Mills notes that this type of description within the travel text is “never an innocent act of merely producing information, but is always inflected by the power relations of the colonial context” (*Discourse* 115). Merlin invites capitalist

⁸ In Letter VII, Merlin consecrates a two-page homage to Christopher Columbus in which she likens him to a god (58-59).

exploitation to the island while justifying it with the discourse of the laziness of the inhabitants, a discourse we will return to later.

Mills discusses another form of differentiation used by the colonising country to represent the colonised culture. She states:

[C]olonisers set the colonised country and its inhabitants in the distant past tense, relegating them to a period which has been superseded by the colonisers, and hence denying them 'coevalness' (...) Through the use of terms such as 'backward', 'primitive', 'feudal', 'medieval', 'developing country' and 'pre-industrial' to describe colonised countries, Fabian argues, the colonised country is set within a past period of British historical development or Western progress and is therefore not permitted to exist on its own terms (...) (Discourse 111)

For the Countess, Cuba remains frozen in time. Upon her arrival, she claims she is surprised by, "la extraña apariencia de esta ciudad de la edad media, que se ha conservado intacta bajo el Trópico" [the strange appearance of this city of the Middle Ages, that has remained intact under the Tropics] (13). Then she says, "La vida doméstica de la Habana parece renovar los encantos de la edad de oro" [The domestic life in Havana seems to renew the charm of the Golden Age] (18). Cuba is trapped in the past, a European past since both the Middle Ages and Spain's Golden Age are European temporal terms. Since Cuba has not kept up with European progress, it is uncivilised and so remains savage. The act of describing people as "savages" or infantilising them also falls under temporal strategies of differentiation. Another strategy is the use of negative terms, such as weak, idle, or dirty, to describe the native inhabitants (Mills, *Discourse* 114). In her depiction of the island, in short, Merlin displays its strategic ambivalence. On the one hand, it is worth attention because it preserves the glorious past of Spanish Culture, but on the other hand, it is also backward. Again, these are all strategies which are part of Merlin's colonial discourse.

Merlin regrets her origins, “hay ocasiones en que siento como una especie de despecho en haber dejenerado de mis antepasados los indios” [there are times when I feel a sort of despair to have degenerated from my ancestors the Indians] (19). She recognises her ancestry, not Indian blood since her class claims *pureza de sangre*, but a romantic recognition of her Creole origins. For Merlin the Indians are part of a mythical past; they have been erased from the landscape. Indeed, her rare references to the ‘Indians’ only proves their exclusion and by that time their extinction. What remains of the indigenous people, the mestizos, as well as lower class Creoles, slaves and mulattos are all stereotyped in Merlin’s text. For her, Cuban people evoke the quintessential image of the “noble savage”; as Sylvia Molloy notes, “the Condesa cherishes her Rousseau: ‘Rousseau and his writings made me lose my mind’” (87).

In the Countess’ view Cubans are mostly good, warm, passionate, and innocent, but idle and neglectful. She is surprised, for example, at how naively they give her gold, as if it were a fruit (18). Her description of the people of the countryside discloses her stereotypical language:

Las gentes del gampo, [sic] llamados aquí guajiros ó monteros, tienen un carácter escéntrico que los distingue de las de los demas paises. Aficionados al canto, dados á los placeres y á las aventuras, reparten su vida entre el amor y las proezas caballerescas, y hubieran podido figurar en la corte de Francisco I tan bien como en estas cabañas primitivas, si su pasion indomable por la independendencia no les hubiese destinado antes á la vida salvage que al yugo de la civilizacion. Su vida material, sencilla y rústica está muy de acuerdo con su vida poética, y esta amalgama es justamente la que dá á su accion un carácter romancesco y original.

[The people of the country, here named *guajiros* or *monteros*, have an eccentric nature that distinguishes them from those of other countries. They are fond of singing, pleasure and adventures, they divide their life between love and knightly prowess, and they could have figured in the court of Francis I as well as in these primitive cabins, if their indomitable passion for independence had not destined them first to the savage life than to the yoke of civilisation. Their material life, simple and rustic agrees with their poetic life, and this combination is exactly what gives their action a romantic and original mark.] (34)

To begin with, these country folk are eccentric. They go about singing and spend their time in adventures and knightly prowess. They have an indomitable passion for their independence and prefer a simple and rustic life, rather than the “yoke of civilisation”. One could argue that Merlin is defending subsistence and non-accumulative lifestyles, except that what she is describing here appears more like a trope in chivalric romance, than the real life of the Cuban country folk.⁹ This is yet another way of placing them in a distant past, as is the reference to Francis I, king of France during the early sixteenth century. One need not know that this letter dedicated to the *guajiro* was partly borrowed from a novel by another Cuban author, Cirilo Villaverde’s *El Guajiro*, as already stated (Mendez, ‘Journey’ 712), to realise that Merlin did not observe their way of life directly.

Merlin does witness, however, the life of the inhabitants of Havana, but these suffer a similar fate, as do the *guajiros* in her text. Merlin classifies Cuban society into slaves and masters. The masters are divided into a land-owning class, her own, and the merchant middle class. The latter consists of Spaniards, mostly from Catalonia, that migrate to Cuba. Merlin notes that the merchants, “llegados sin patrimonio á la isla, acaban por hacer grandes fortunas; comienzan á prosperar por su industria y economía, y acaban por apoderarse de los mas hermosos patrimonios hereditarios, por el alto interés á que prestan su dinero” [arrive without patrimony to the island, they end up making great fortunes; they begin to prosper by their industriousness and saving, and end up taking possession of the most beautiful inherited patrimonies, because of the high interest they charge to lend their money] (30). Since this merchant class ends up with the wealth of the aristocracy, she declares it immoral, “yo no puedo creer que un bien pueda nacer de una inmoralidad” [I can’t believe that good can come from immorality] (31). Although they are Spaniards, the

⁹ This is also comparable to the cowboy or bushman romance in the United States and Australia or to the gaucho in Argentina.

merchants arrive without patrimony and they prosper through their own effort. They are thus, a threat to the status of the aristocracy. Yet, Merlin's discourse is disjunctive for, on the one hand, she mentions the industriousness of the merchant class and, on the other, she claims they are immoral and declares them lazy, "La pereza y la poesía de lo presente lo absorben todo, y si los habaneros se ocupan del porvenir, se ocupan de él solamente como de una dicha inmediata" [Laziness and the poetry of the present absorb everything, and if the people of Havana occupy themselves with the future, they do it only as an immediate happiness] (33). Even the Catalanian merchants are included in the conventional representations of laziness and neglect under which the rest of Cuban society falls.¹⁰

Within Merlin's discourse Cuban society, with the exception of the aristocracy, is lazy, indolent, and neglectful. She describes business transactions in Havana as slow and rarely done successfully. She states, "Para ahorrarse de dar un paso, de decir una palabra, de poner una firma, hay siempre una disculpa, hay siempre un pretexto, hay siempre un mañana. El sol, un sol implacable se está interponiendo perpétuamente entre vos y vuestros agentes, entre vuestros agentes y vuestros negocios" [To avoid an extra step, an extra word, an extra signature, there is always an excuse, there is always a pretext, there is always a tomorrow. The sun, an implacable sun is perpetually getting between you and your agents, between your agents and your business] (Merlin 19). Hence, for Merlin, the "implacable sun" is the reason why people leave things for later and always try to save themselves any extra steps. For Merlin the laziness of these people is natural. By claiming their laziness is due to the sun, it is inevitable, (rather than morally reprehensible) unlike Europe where nature is not "implacable" and people are not lazy.

¹⁰ The ambivalent treatment of Catalonians can probably be read as parallel to the ambivalent treatment of Cuba as a whole since Catalonia was marginal in the construction of Spain as Castilian.

Merlin's use of the topic of nature is also related to the discourse on primal nature that was mentioned earlier. This discourse circulated widely in Europe thanks to the writings of authors like Humboldt, who travelled extensively throughout South America. Pratt states the following:

Nineteenth-century Europeans reinvented America as Nature in part because that is how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans had invented America for themselves in the first place, and for many of the same reasons. Though deeply rooted in eighteenth-century constructions of Nature and Man, Humboldt's seeing-man is also a self-conscious double of the first European inventors of America, Columbus, Vespucci, Raleigh, and the others. They, too, wrote America as a primal world of nature, an unclaimed and timeless space occupied by plants and creatures (some of them human), but not organized by societies and economies; a world whose only history was the one about to begin. Their writings too portrayed America in a discourse of accumulation, abundance, and innocence. (*Imperial Eyes* 126)

Merlin makes many references to this "tierra maravillosa" (marvellous land), where anything is possible (33). She calls it "un mundo encantado" (an enchanted world) (21) where one raindrop can almost fill a glass (47), and where trees are so full of fruit they bend with their weight (69). This exotic paradise, overwhelmed by "a nature that dwarfs humans, commands their being, arouses their passions, defies their powers of perception" (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 120), is given as the reason why the inhabitants are still savage; "the more savage the nature, the more savage the culture" (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 133). Tropical America, this primal paradise that Merlin's text also "reinvents", is encoded in colonial discourse. Its lack of civilisation is due to the negligence and idleness of its inhabitants, which is in turn due to nature. This is a recurring theme in Merlin's text and one which is complemented by other stereotypical descriptions of the inhabitants of this region including the above-mentioned idea of the "noble savage". Merlin presents a picture of idleness and inertia when she describes the *habanero*. His "passionate soul" only thinks of the present, never of the future:

(...) la pereza y la negligencia enervan su voluntad. Así como la sangre concentrada por el ardor de la atmósfera huye la superficie de su piel, y refugiándose en el fondo de sus venas le dá esa palidez innata y característica de los habitantes de los

Trópicos, así también su voluntad debilitada por el olvido y por su indiferencia, no se vuelve á despertar en él sino en fuerza de grandes pasiones, ó de grandes necesidades.

[(...) laziness and negligence weaken his will. Just as the blood concentrated by the heat of the atmosphere flees from the surface of his skin, and takes refuge in the depth of his veins giving him that innate and characteristic paleness of the inhabitants of the Tropics, so his will weakened by neglect and his indifference, does not awaken again in him except by the force of great passions or great needs.]
(Merlin 34)

The negative language is persistent: laziness, negligence, weak will power, and indifference, accompanied by another element -- that of the passion of the inhabitants.

Merlin's perception of the passion of the inhabitants of Havana is also described in terms of their voluptuousness. For example, she refers to "la voluptuosidad habanera recostada con negligencia" [the voluptuosity of Havana lying with negligence] upon the carriages used for transportation (107). In another example, she describes Cuban women as more flirtatious than the blond duchesses of London and Edinburgh; their vivacity is disguised under "morbid and voluptuous forms" (107). Just as these representations are used to describe humans, so too the air is voluptuous (109) and life in the island is "sensual" (70). The inhabitants, their life, and their nature are described as passionate, voluptuous, morbid, negligent, simple, sensual, idle, immoral, ardent, and weak. All these words, including those which could be used in positive ways, allude to a lack of civilisation since they indicate the opposition between mind and matter where Cuba, and America itself, are matter, primal nature, sensual, passionate and female, and Europe is mind, civilised, and male. Similarly Mendus and Rendall argue:

Human beings (especially men) appropriated nature in this period [the nineteenth century], and the appropriation was a consequence of the hypothesis of a dualism of mind and matter. In this dualism, however, rationality became a supreme value and a value associated exclusively with men. Women by contrast were consigned to the matter part of the dichotomy, along with beasts of nature, and members of the working classes and other races (8).

Therefore, Europe is equivalent to mind, to civilisation, to history and art whereas Cuba has none; “Cuba no tiene historia, no tiene escudo de armas; no tiene mas que un árbol gigantesco y las cenizas de Colon” [Cuba has no history, it does not have a coat of arms; it only has a gigantic tree and Columbus’ ashes] (Merlin 31).

Yet another deficiency is in its art. Merlin describes the cathedral of Havana, “su arquitectura *semi-española y semi-clásica no tiene ni estilo ni antigüedad*. Es un género mixto compuesto del árabe, del gótico y aun *del mejicano primitivo*, que como todas las obras del arte en *los pueblos infantiles* es una *imitacion de la naturaleza*” [its *semi-Spanish and semi-classical* architecture *has no style and no antiquity*. It is a mixed type composed of the Arab, the Gothic and even *the primitive Mexican*, that like all the works of art in *infant peoples* is an *imitation of nature*] (55, emphasis mine). There is no style, no antiquity in this art. She generalises once again, remarking that all “infant peoples”, unlike Europeans who imagine and create, can only imitate nature in their art. She goes on to say that the artlessness of these peoples’ hands “wounds” the imagination (56), that is, wounds her superior European sensitivity to art. In the following poetic quotation, Merlin summarises her perceptions of this matter:

(...) á Cuba le falta la poesía de los recuerdos; sus ecos solo repiten la poesía de la esperanza. Sus edificios no tienen historia. El habanero vive en lo presente y en lo porvenir; su imaginacion y su alma no se mueven sino ante la prodigiosa naturaleza que les rodea; sus palacios son las gigantescas nubes que besan el sol en su ocaso; sus arcos de triunfo la bóveda de los cielos: en lugar de obeliscos tienen palmeras; en lugar de escudos feudales la pluma resplandeciente del guacamayo, y en lugar de cuadros de Murillo y de Rafael los negros ojos de sus mujeres (...)

[(...) Cuba lacks the poetry of memories; its echoes only repeat the poetry of hope. Its buildings have no history. The inhabitant of Havana lives in the present and in future time; his imagination and his soul only move before the wonderful nature that surrounds him; his palaces are the gigantic clouds that kiss the sun at dusk; his *arc de triomphe* is the sky: instead of obelisks he has palm trees; instead of feudal escutcheons he has the shining feather of the macaw, and instead of paintings by Murillo and Raphael he has the dark eyes of his women (...)] (56)

Therefore, since Cuba lacks these necessary components of civilization, its inhabitants must conform to what they do have. Thus Merlin, through this juxtaposition between Europe and Cuba, naturalises Cuba's backwardness.

Reconciling Identities: Journey to the Past

After discussing Merlin's perception of Cuba's social classes, of race and of the political issue of slavery, this analysis now leads to the question of Merlin's identity. The topic of Merlin's plagiarism provides a way of interpreting the hybrid nature of her identity. In a persuasive article, Méndez defends Merlin from the critics who have accused her of plagiarism. She argues that Merlin's "borrowings" from the works of her compatriots were her conscious efforts at describing *criollo* society and that, "*Viaje a La Habana* is a rewriting of Cuban *costumbrista* (local colour) literature from a woman's perspective" (Méndez, 'Journey' 710).¹¹ Méndez adds:

Hence this gesture proves Merlin's desire to participate in Cuban literary circles not as a distanced European observer but rather as a "prodigal daughter" who returns home. By consciously parodying the local color sketches of the Cuban romantics, the author Merlin was searching for a source, a literary source or tradition in which to insert herself as a full-fledged *criolla*. ('Journey' 713)

Méndez also notes that the practice of "borrowing" was not uncommon for Cuban authors at that time (725). Moreover, Mills argues that "travel writing has always appropriated other writing, sometimes explicitly but often by plagiarising" (*Discourses of Difference* 74). This, however, is not a "defence" of Merlin, but rather a discussion on Merlin's plagiarism as a strategy of identification with Cuba. Hence, the idea of Merlin's "journey to the literary source" serves to endorse this chapter's conclusions, inasmuch as

¹¹ Méndez does a feminist interpretation of Merlin's adaptation of Palma's novel, *Una Pascua en San Marcos* (Letter IX). Since Merlin significantly changes the ending, Méndez argues, "If Palma resolves the moral problem by a marriage of appearances, suggesting society's implicit sanction of female victimization, Merlin's heroine acknowledges her suffering and carries it to its ultimate consequences" (Journey 724).

for Merlin the text is also a journey into her past. It is her attempt at recovering a past which will solidify her identity as a *criolla*.

It is significant, in this sense, that Merlin's voyage to Havana is in fact a second trip, her first voyage being her migration to Europe as a child. In Europe, she lived first in Spain where her "savage" Cuban education, which her father had tried to correct by sending her to a convent while still on the island, was effaced. Not only was her "primitive" Creole identity curbed, but she also became a countess upon marrying a French count. As Méndez puts it, "the *criolla* Santa Cruz y Montalvo transformed herself into one of the leading belles-dames of the Parisian cultural establishment" ('Journey' 709).

Who then, was the 52-year-old woman who returns to Cuba after having lived close to 40 years in Europe? Was she a *criolla* or a French countess? Was she María Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo or was she the Countess of Merlin? Unmistakably she was both; Merlin was inevitably a hybrid being, product not only of Cuba and France, but also of her Spanish lineage. Furthermore, what does Cuba really mean for the Countess? Is it a primitive savage world that needs the hand of Europe to shape it? It is a world that is not only behind in chronological time, but is also part of her past; it is a romantic idea of an island she does not really know. It is the land of her childhood, that distant place that lives in the memory and that never be retrieved; it is the land of her origins.

Merlin strives, through her writing on Cuba, to reconcile her different identities. The conflict that arises from this attempt is indicated by the dichotomy of her discourse; there are only masters and slaves, history and art versus primal nature, mind and matter and ultimately a civilised Europe and a savage Cuba. Merlin is left stranded in the middle of all these. She cannot harmonise the different discourses and she is left with a severed identity.

The Countess is torn between her discourses on class, with her fear of the bourgeoisie, and her pretensions at liberal and progressive thought. Merlin pretends to be liberal and progressive because the discourse of her time imposes it on her but her discourses are extremely conservative and hierarchical. In Merlin's binary world there is not much consciousness of the colonial nature of her discourse, which she uses, for example, to describe the inhabitants of Cuba. She *others* them in a way similar to that in which women were being *othered* in Europe at that time.

Whether consciously or not, Merlin attempts to correct this by recovering her past, that is, the child Mercedes. Consider the following:

No sé decirte, hija mia, cuál ha sido mi emoción al encontrarme en medio de esta ciudad en que he nacido y donde he dado mis primeros pasos en la vida. Cada objeto que hería mi vista renovaba una impresión de mi infancia, y me sentía penetrada de una alegría algo salvaje que me hacía llorar y reír al mismo tiempo. Me parecía que todo lo que veía era mío, que todas las personas que encontraba eran amigos: hubiera abrazado á las mujeres; les hubiera dado la mano á los hombres; todo me gustaba; las frutas, los negros que las llevaban de venta, las negras que se pavoneaban balanceando sus caderas en medio de la calle con sus pañuelos en la cabeza, con sus brazaletes y su cigarro en la boca; me gustaban hasta las plantas parásitas que crecen entre las guirnaldas del aguinaldo y del manzanillo que penden de las paredes; el canto de los pájaros, el aire, la luz, el ruido, todo me embriagaba; estaba loca, y era feliz.

[I cannot tell you, dear daughter, what my feelings have been at finding myself in the middle of this city in which I was born and where I took my first steps in life. Each object that wounded my sight renewed an impression of my childhood, and I felt penetrated by a somewhat wild happiness that made me cry and laugh at the same time. It seemed to me that everything I saw was mine, that all the people I found were friends: I would have embraced the women; I would have given my hand to the men; I liked everything; the fruit, the Negroes that sold them, the Negro women that strutted balancing their hips in the middle of the street with their handkerchiefs on the heads, with their bracelets and their cigars in the mouth; I even liked the parasitic plants that grow between the wreaths of the Christmas tree and apple tree that hang from the walls; the song of the birds, the air, the light, the noise, everything intoxicated me; I was crazed and happy.] (Merlin 13)

Merlin reveals her need for recovering her past, specially her childhood. She wishes to recover a time when her happiness was "wild" and when she was not limited by the strict laws of her European social class; when she was still completely a Creole.

Merlin spent two months in the city where she was born. She returned to France to write. She wrote in French, in exile, her attempt at recovering the past. Nevertheless, for this 51-year-old woman her past is, “an irrecoverable world, a *patria* out of reach in time and space, only recaptured through the detailed recreation of writing” (Molloy 85). For Merlin the past can only be grasped within her writing. Hence she has to imagine and reinvent her past, her Cuba, her identity. Following Molloy:

Little by little, Cuba would become a literary construct for the Condesa. Forty years later, when writing *La Havane*, the autobiographical account of her first trip back to Cuba since childhood, she would reconstruct her island less from direct observation than from unacknowledged borrowings from *costumbrista* authors and from her own memories. Rediscovery came to her less from what she saw on that trip than from what she read, remembered and imagined (93).

The texts she read were her compatriots’ accounts of Cuba. These are the texts that she transculturated, to use Fernando Ortiz’ (another Cuban) useful term, for her European audience. What she does not know she will invent and so her text becomes also a hybrid; it is autobiography, it is transculturated *costumbrista* sketch, it is political essay and travelogue and finally, it is her poetic reinvention of the exotic paradise of her childhood and her origins. Likewise Merlin reinvents herself a number of times, as migrant and exile, as prodigal daughter returning home, as re-discoverer of an ancient, forgotten primal world, as liberal concerned with the fate of her island and the slaves, as conservative aristocrat, as Romantic and *costumbrista* writer, and as Parisian *belle-dame*.

CHAPTER III

Soledad Acosta de Samper: the Self-fashioning of an Erudite *Criolla*

Señora, tenéis un hijo de quien se habla mucho y una hija de quien no se habla nada: este es el mejor elogio que se puede hacer de una cristiana, y yo te lo recomiendo para que trates de merecerlo. Para el hombre el ruido y las espinas de la gloria; para la mujer las rosas y el sosiego del hogar; para él, el humo de la pólvora; para ella, el sahumerio de alhucema. Él destroza, ella conserva; él aja, ella limpia; él maldice, ella bendice; él reniega, ella ora.

[Madam, you have a son, who is talked about a lot and a daughter, of whom nobody talks: this is the best compliment that can be paid to a Christian woman, and I recommend you try to deserve it. For the man the noise and thorns of glory; for the woman the roses and tranquillity of the home; for him, smoke and gunpowder; for her, flower incense. He destroys, she conserves; he chops, she cleans; he curses, she blesses; he blasphemes, she prays.] (Vergara in Londoño, 'Mujer Santaferense' online)

Delegate of Colombia

In 1892, the Fourth Centenary of the Discovery of America was commemorated in Spain through a series of exhibitions and conferences such as the *IX Congreso Internacional de Americanistas* (IX International Congress of Americanists) inaugurated in the convent of La Rábida, in Huelva on the 7th October. Among the delegates of Latin America, which included renowned intellectuals and writers such as the Peruvian Ricardo Palma, a woman named Soledad Acosta de Samper represented her country, Colombia, in this event. Acosta de Samper was also invited to two other congresses that were part of that same commemoration. In two of these congresses, she read papers she had been requested to write for them. Of special interest was the one she read at a pedagogical conference where she referred to the need for the professional education of women (Acosta, II 161).¹ In this way, Acosta de Samper is a rare exception to the fact that most women travellers in the

nineteenth century did not have any institutional or governmental support, as Mills notes in her research (*Discourses of Difference* 114-115). Acosta de Samper not only represented her country in the commemoration of the discovery of America, but she was also an active participant in the congresses.

Evidently, Soledad Acosta de Samper was not a conventional nineteenth-century Colombian woman. She had had an exceptional education for a woman of her time, spoke French and English, and was very much concerned about the education of women. In short, she did not follow the advice, in the epigraph above, of contemporary and compatriot writer José María Vergara y Vergara in his *Consejos a una niña* (*Advice to a Girl*).² She did not remain in the “tranquillity of the home”, choosing instead a life dedicated to writing as well as towards the education of women in her country, “para que la MUJER obtenga entre nosotros una educación adecuada á su inteligencia y sus aptitudes” [so that WOMEN obtain among us an education adequate to their intelligence and aptitudes] (II 156, emphasis in the original). She was so dedicated to writing that scholars have compiled a bibliography listing of 192 of her texts: 37 novels, 49 short stories, 59 essays and articles, 21 history texts, 4 plays, 12 travel accounts, 5 newspapers established and directed by her, and 10 translations from English, French and German, of essays and novels (Rodríguez-Arenas 137). Of these writings, only a few were republished in a compilation entitled *Una nueva lectura* (*A New Reading*) in 1988.

One of Soledad Acosta de Samper’s travel accounts was the book she wrote after her voyage to Spain to participate in the centenary of the discovery, *Viaje a España en 1892* (*Voyage to Spain in 1892*). The text was published in two volumes, the first one in 1893

¹ The roman numerals I and II correspond to volume one and two of the work respectively.

² Vergara y Vergara was a Colombian writer and academic who lived between 1831 and 1872. See Londoño online.

(Chapters I through XX) and the second one in 1894 (Chapters XXI through XXXIV).

The author, who was travelling with her daughter, narrated the text using the first person plural “we”. For the most part, however, the narrative voice resorts to an objective and impersonal third person when describing or recounting the history of a place. Mills refers to this type of narrative voice and explains it in the following way:

(...) there are essentially two types of travel writing, each with their own narrative figure: (...) the “manners and customs” figure and the “sentimental” figure, the main difference being that the former is largely impersonal, where the narrator is absent, and the latter foregrounds the narrator (...) the authority of the manners and customs type text comes from the informational, scientific nature of its content. (*Discourses of Difference* 75-76)

Therefore, Acosta de Samper uses her narrative voice to inform and educate the reader through “objective” observations that appear throughout the text in the chronological order of the voyage. The travel account covers the voyage through Spain entering the country from the north, from France, on 9 September and crossing the border back to France on 19 November 1892, after all the commemoration activities were over.

The two-volume work is full of descriptions and historical accounts of all the cities she traverses, descriptions which are probably meant for her audience back home. It is, consequently, replete with information which, for the purposes of this chapter, have been separated into the discourses that give shape to Acosta de Samper’s identity. One of the most dominant discourses found in her text is the one relating to her historical narrations. The argument in the section termed “History and Architecture of Power”, which includes the historical accounts of cities and the depiction of monumental landmarks (churches, palaces, museums, etc.), is that the author constructs an authoritative erudite voice and also an identification with Spanish history through these. The discourse termed “filial affection” is described next, followed by a discussion of the way Acosta de Samper reveals the nexuses between Spain and Colombia (and the American ex-colonies in general) and

points to the positive as well as the negative legacies of Spain in the New World. This serves to highlight the discourses which the author uses in her evaluation of the Spanish heritage and how this in turn affects her perceptions of Creole identity.

A third discourse identified in Acosta de Samper's text involves an apparent contradiction; Spain is depicted as both civilised and backward. This refers to the dichotomy between civilisation and barbarism which was also present in the analysis of the Countess of Merlin. Here, Acosta de Samper is also employing a strategy of comparison to construct a relational identity by describing Spain as backward in *relation* to other European nations and to the new republics of America whose political achievements (democracy in particular) she values. Spain thus emerges as remarkable only as origin and source of the American civilisation and in particular its religious legacy, Catholicism, with which the author fully identifies.

Fourth, Acosta de Samper's contradictory discourses on class are discussed; her descriptions of the Spanish aristocracy as well as of the gypsies and beggars reveal her class identity. In this section of the analysis, I argue that Acosta de Samper complies with a political position in which democracy is deemed a superior form of government, but that this conflicts with the preservation of social hierarchies she considers fundamental to the proper functioning of society. Finally, Acosta de Samper's opinions on the role of women in the society of her era are discussed. The congresses in which she participated give her the opportunity to comment on gender issues by describing the reception of women's ideas by both male and female participants.

The General's Daughter

Soledad Acosta was born on the 5 May 1833, in Bogotá, the capital of the then named Republic of New Granada (Colombia). She was the only child of independence General and historian Joaquín Acosta and a British woman, Carolina Kemble. Due to her father's work in the government, the family briefly resided in Quito when she was four years old and then in Washington when she was ten. In 1845, accompanied by her mother, she travelled to Halifax to visit her maternal grandmother. They then joined her father in Paris where Acosta de Samper resided and received an education until 1855.

Upon her return to Colombia and soon after her father's death, she married José María Samper, a prominent political thinker and a writer as prolific as she was. After the birth of two daughters, she travelled back to Europe with her family. Acosta de Samper began her career as a writer by doing translations for various newspapers and produced her first book *Recuerdos de Suiza (Memoirs of Switzerland)* (Rodríguez-Arenas 134). Between 1862 and 1864, she lived in Lima, where her husband established the journal *Revista Americana* and edited the newspaper *El Comercio*. She collaborated with her husband in these two publications. In 1869, she published *Novelas y cuadros de la vida sur-americana (Novels and Word-pictures of South American Life)* in Belgium. This was a compilation of a series of novels and short stories that she had written, under pseudonyms such as S.A.S. (her initials), Aldebarán, Bertilda, Olga, Andina and Renato (a masculine name), for newspapers in Bogotá (Rodríguez-Arenas 135).

The use of pseudonyms was not uncommon at that time; many women writers collaborated in journals or magazines on that condition, in some cases they even preferred anonymity. In other cases, men signed with feminine names when writing about feminine

topics (Londoño, 'Publicaciones Periódicas', online). The use of pseudonyms, as Mills notes, was due to the fact that:

Many women were discouraged from writing since it was considered (...) to be sexually improper for a woman to enter into the realm of this public, high language (...) Many women for this reason refused to put their names to their literary writing or used pseudonyms. It is this realisation that writing cannot come from simply anyone (...) that makes women's writing different, because the conditions of production are different for most women. (*Discourses of Difference* 41)

- ✓ Despite the limits put on women's writing, in 1876, Acosta de Samper used her writing to support her family when her husband was politically persecuted and imprisoned by the government and their house and printing press were expropriated.

In this way, Acosta de Samper was able to contribute to the formation of a literary model directed to women in Colombia through her writing in newspapers and magazines. According to Londoño, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in Colombia, the periodical publications directed to women changed; from being dedicated "to the fair sex" only in name, they started to include information which would be interesting to women. They included articles about the history of women in "civilisation", galleries of notable women, articles on moral and religious education for women and commentaries on the situation of women ('Publicaciones Periódicas', online).

Five publications of this type were edited by Acosta de Samper and featured her articles, ranging from explanations of the gospel and biographies of female saints and queens to writings about the education of children. These were: *La Mujer* (a fortnightly magazine exclusively run by women, which appeared from September 1878 to May 1881), *La Familia* (established in 1844), *El Domingo de la Familia Cristiana*, *Lecturas para el Hogar* and *El Domingo* (Londoño, 'Publicaciones Periódicas', online). In addition to these publications directed specifically to women, she collaborated in *La Prensa*, *La Ley*, *La Unión Colombiana*,

El Deber, *El Mosaico*, *Biblioteca de Señoritas*, *La Nación* and *El Eco Literario* and in various foreign publications (Rodríguez-Arenas 136).

In 1888, Acosta de Samper's husband died. This event was soon followed by the deaths of two of her four daughters during an epidemic while her oldest daughter, Bertilda, joined a Benedictine convent. In 1890 Acosta de Samper returned to live in Paris from which she travelled to Spain as delegate of Colombia to the commemoration of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. She then returned to Colombia where she published *Viaje a España en 1892*. She spent her last years accompanied by her youngest daughter and continued her dedication to writing, particularly to writing historical texts. Soledad Acosta de Samper died 17 March 1913, two months before her 80th birthday.

The History and Architecture of Power

Among the historical writings of Soledad Acosta de Samper's later years she wrote her father's biography, *Biografía del General Joaquín Acosta. Prócer de la Independencia, historiador, geógrafo, hombre científico y filántropo* (Biography of the General Joaquín Acosta. Hero of the Independence, Historian, Geographer, Scientist and Philanthropist) (1901) and *Biografía del General Antonio Nariño* (Biography of the General Antonio Nariño) (1910). Both of these men were Independence heroes and she admired both. General Joaquín Acosta, as the title to his biography says, was a man of science (he had studied geography in Europe and had met Humboldt and Gay-Lussac among many other scientists) as well as a remarkable historian. He had gone to Europe in 1845 to research the *Archivo de Indias* in order to write his *Compendio histórico del descubrimiento y colonización de la Nueva Granada en el siglo decimosexto* (Historical Compendium of the Discovery and Colonisation of New Granada in the Sixteenth Century),

a historical account of New Granada from prehispanic times to the death of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, founder of Bogotá, in 1579 (Melo online).

Joaquín Acosta believed that the political and social character of the new republic could be understood and ameliorated by studying the past, thus his history book, “a más de narrar con buen detalle las diversas expediciones de conquista, hizo el primer esfuerzo de descripción de las culturas indígenas, dentro de una perspectiva poco marcada por el racismo” [besides narrating with detail the different expeditions of the conquest, made the first effort to describe the indigenous cultures, under a non-racist perspective] (Melo online). Soledad Acosta de Samper writes in her travelogue, “La historia es, pues, una ciencia que cada día debe considerarse más importante, no solamente porque registra los hechos pasados sino porque es la clave de los hechos presentes” [History is, thus, an increasingly important science, not only because it registers past events but also because it is the key to the events of the present] (I 217). Following her father’s opinion of the importance of history, the author shows great concern with this discipline throughout her text; she reveals this with the historical accounts which pervade her text and which make the present intelligible for her.

In accordance with this concern with history and following her repeated motto, “Para comprender lo presente creo que se debe conocer lo pasado” [To understand the present one must know the past] (II 22), *Viaje a España en 1892* has entire chapters devoted to the narration of historical events relevant to the places she visits. Consciousness of her father’s historic role in Colombia, and with her journalistic training in factual reportage and social commentary, Acosta de Samper uses history as a means of documenting her travels and constructing herself as an authoritative voice inhabiting the intersection of Spanish past and Latin American future. Hence, her identity as an educated woman, daughter of

independence General Acosta --man of science and erudition-- is one of the most distinctive features of her text.

Throughout her travel account Acosta de Samper's concern with history directs her gaze to the cities, churches, convents, and political and religious institutions she visits and very particularly, to the architecture of each place. Moreover, she is also greatly interested in recounting the names of those men who made history and thus she mentions the prominent men who were born wherever she travels, as in this passage when she arrives in Bilbao:

No son muchos los varones renombrados en la Historia que nacieron en Bilbao y que se hicieron notables en las antiguas colonias españolas de América; sin embargo señálanse algunos de los conquistadores del Istmo de Panamá, así como varios Presidentes y Gobernadores y un Obispo de Arequipa y de Quito,--el Ilustrísimo Señor Agustín de Saravia,-- quien había vivido y dejado buenos recuerdos en Cartagena de Indias.

[There aren't many remarkable men in History who were born in Bilbao and who became noteworthy in the old Spanish colonies of America; nonetheless one may note some of the conquistadors of the Isthmus of Panama, as well as various Presidents and Governors and a Bishop of Arequipa and of Quito -- the most Illustrious Agustín de Saravia -- who lived and is well remembered in Cartagena de Indias.] (I 24)

The bishops, kings, queens, the conquistadors, the men who colonised the New World, in other words, the political, religious, historical, literary and artistic figures from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, are the names that populate her text, and that reveal her vast knowledge of history as well as of literature and even art.

Moreover, Acosta de Samper announces, "A cada paso que se da en España le asaltan á una recuerdos históricos" [At every step taken in Spain one is stormed by historical memories] (I 77). It is clear that she knew and had researched the history of Spain as

revealed by her various references to history books³. For her, this was her own history: “me parecía soñar cuando resonaban en mi oído esos nombres históricos que evocaban tantos hechos magnos de nuestros antepasados” [I thought I was dreaming when I heard those historical names which evoked so many of our ancestors’ great deeds] (I 104). In this way, Acosta de Samper assumes Spain’s history as her own, as part of her past, although she will later critique this heritage.

A consistent pattern emerges from Acosta de Samper’s historical narrations. It is clear that the places that are worth visiting and writing about are, for her, those where power resides; the buildings that represent political and religious institutions such as churches, convents, universities and palaces among others. Each time she moves to a new city, she mentions the method of transportation used to get there and the places of historical importance that are passed on the way. The new arrival at a city signals a historical and architectural description of it.⁴ Finally, the prominent men that represent these institutions are mentioned: politicians, poets, bishops. Hence, in accordance with nineteenth-century conceptions of history, Acosta de Samper saw history as the history of the great institutions and the great men that represent them, ignoring the lower classes, and at the same time strengthening her erudite narrative voice.

Since Acosta de Samper is a devout Catholic, cathedrals are her favourite places and she describes them in detail. For instance, writing about the cathedral in Burgos she says:

Sería imposible describir todo lo que vimos! La parte más larga de la Catedral mide 81 metros y los brazos de la cruz 58. Tiene tres naves paralelas y la bóveda central se levanta hasta 60 metros de altura. El coro y el altar mayor forman como un

³Such as *Historia general de Vizcaya* (*General history of Vizcaya*) by Iruñiza y Zabala (I 16), *Historia de las grandezas de León* (*History of the greatness of León*) by Fray Atanasio de Lobera (I 109), and *Cristóbal Colón y Sánchez de Huelva* (*Christopher Columbus and Sánchez de Huelva*) by Baldomero de Lorenzo y Leal (II 108).

⁴As for example Bilbao (I 24), Burgos (I 71), Valladolid (I 100), León (I 107), Coruña (I 126), Galicia (I 133), Santiago de Compostela (I 152), Madrid (I 217), Córdoba (I 238), Granada (II 13), Sevilla (II 68), and Toledo (II 195).

templo interior dentro del otro, rodeado de capillas distintas. La reja que circunda el coro es de hierro labradísimo, con pilastras de piedra cubiertas de ornamentos. La sillería esculpida, de madera de nogal con embutidos de boj, las columnas y pilastras de mármol y de jaspe, todo esto es una maravilla de arte que sería preciso estudiar durante días enteros, para apreciar su mérito.

[It would be impossible to describe everything we saw! The longest part of the Cathedral is 81 metres long and the arms of the cross 58. It has three naves and the central arch is 60 metres tall. The choir and the main altar form an interior temple inside the other, surrounded by different chapels. The fence around the choir is made from worked iron, with stone pillars covered with ornaments. The seats are sculpted of walnut wood with inlaid boxwood work, the columns and pillars are made of marble and jasper, all of which is a wonder of art which would require entire days of study to appreciate its worth.] (I 66-67)

She does not stop with the description of the structure; she must also illustrate the treasures inside:

En todas las capillas se encuentran maravillas artísticas, cuadros de maestros famosos; esculturas; las tumbas de los fundadores de cada uno de ellos, en piedra, en mármol, en jaspe; efigies de Santos; altares en los cuales el piadoso artista de la Edad Media empleó su vida entera en idearlos, ejecutarlos y perfeccionarlos. Y ¡qué diremos de los vasos sagrados, de plata, oro y engastados en piedras preciosas! Y las lámparas de finísimos metales; y los candelabros, obra de conocidos artífices, que valen un tesoro; y los bustos y estatuas, cornisas, blasones y rejas de bronce; y los tapices antiquísimos, y los ornamentos bordados por dedos de hada, como ya nadie en nuestra época tiene paciencia para llevar á cabo. Y aquello no vale solamente por la riqueza de los metales y la perfección de la obra de arte, sino por los recuerdos que encierran. Son regalos de Santos, de Papas, de Reyes, de Príncipes, de grandes hombres de todas las épocas de la historia de España.

[In all the chapels you find artistic wonders, paintings by great masters; sculptures; the tombstones of the founders of each of them, in stone, marble, jasper; effigies of Saints; altars which the pious artists of the Middle Ages spent his entire life designing, creating and perfecting. And what could we say of the sacred cups, of silver, gold, set with precious stones! And the lamps of precious metals; and the candle holders, the work of famous artists, that are worth a fortune; and the busts and statues, cornices, coat of arms, and bronze fences; and the antique tapestries, and the ornaments embroidered by the fingers of fairies, for which no one in our time has patience. And this is not just worth due to the wealth of the metals and the perfection of the work of art, but for the memories it holds. They are the gifts of Saints, Popes, Kings, Princes, and of great men of all the periods of the history of Spain.] (I 68-69)

These treasures, however, are not seen to be of value because of the perfection or mastery of the anonymous artist which crafted them. They are of value only because they represent

the saints, popes, kings, and princes --that is the great men-- who donated them to the church.

Acosta de Samper describes many other cathedrals with as much detail, as for example the one in León (I 111), and the cathedral of Toledo, which she claims has so much wealth the debt of a nation could be paid with it (II 202). In addition to cathedrals, the places that most impress the author are those that are famous for their religious meaning --places such as the sanctuary of St. Ignatius Loyola. Along with the biography of the saint, starting from his birth to his death (I 44-46), Acosta de Samper includes a history and a detailed description of the sanctuary (I 48-51).

Another important place is Santiago de Compostela called “Jerusalem of the West”, and a famous place of pilgrimage, to which Acosta de Samper dedicates Chapters XIII to XVI. As usual she begins with a description of the city (I 152-154), then its history (I 155-164) followed by an enumeration of monuments the first of which is the cathedral. Chapter XIV is entirely devoted to the description of the cathedral with its statues, columns, altars, relics, temples and towers. Twice during this visit to the cathedral of Santiago she is shown into places that are not open to the public (I 173 and 177). This is another distinctive feature of her narrative; during her journey, Acosta de Samper enjoys certain privileges as when she sends “letters of introduction” wherever she arrives and is thus escorted in her sightseeing by important political figures, such as the mayor of Granada (II 20). She even gets to speak to Queen Cristina (II 143) which shows how high up on the social ladder she belonged. Also, the fact that she documents these privileges reinforces her authoritative voice. In the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela she mentions the silver, the precious stones, the marble, the fine woods, the antique works of art that make up the treasures opened for her view only.

Santiago de Compostela is the epitome of Catholicism for Acosta de Samper since the penitentiary prebendary has been granted permission to forgive sins that can only be forgiven in Rome (I 176). She marvels at the quantity of buildings devoted to the Catholic religion; the palace where the priests live, a building to give asylum to the pilgrims, the Archbishop's palace, the seminary, the convent of St. Martin followed by nine more named after other saints, several churches and many more so that it seems to her that there are more monuments than private houses in that city (I 180). She only describes the more important ones; the Palace of the Archbishop, the Royal Hospital, the Seminary, the College of Medicine, the University, the School of Arts and Crafts, the old convent of Dominican monks which is a college for the blind and deaf and the church of St. Frances, its history and establishment (I 192). She also mentions the many buildings dedicated to Catholic charity for the old, for the poor, for the homeless, for the handicapped, for the sick (I 200).

The Catholic faith is imposing, admirable, splendid and charitable, in other words it represents civilisation. Acosta de Samper expresses it this way:

Allí pude contemplar aquella civilización nacida de la fe cristiana y que inspiró todas las hazañas de otros siglos, fe que dió por resultado la unificación del reino español; fe que no arredraba ni sacrificios; fe que en la época de los Reyes católicos cubrió de gloria á aquella nación; fe que la obligó á arruinar su comercio y su agricultura con la persecución de los intrusos árabes y judíos; fe ante la cual no vaciló nunca y prefería perder todos los bienes de este mundo si éstos eran contrarios á la Religión, que profesaba con amor fanático, si se quiere, pero sincerísimo, y por consiguiente digno de admiración y de respeto.

[There I was able to contemplate that civilisation born of the Christian faith that inspired the prowess of other centuries, faith which resulted in the unification of the Spanish kingdom; faith which did not avoid sacrifices; faith which at the time of the Catholic Kings covered the nation with glory; faith which forced it to ruin its commerce and agriculture with the persecution of the Arab and Jewish intruders; faith which never faltered preferring the loss of all the goods of the world if they were contrary to the Religion, professed with fanatical love, if you will, but very sincere, and so worthy of admiration and respect.] (I 198)

The recurrent topic of religion is not only common for a Catholic like Acosta de Samper, but it also one of the instances that inform women's writing, as already mentioned in the previous chapter. It enables the narrator a powerful position without transgressing the feminine discourse established for women (Mills, *Discourses of Difference* 97). In Acosta de Samper's view, besides reinforcing the feminine discourses of her time, it is also a way for her to display her knowledge of the history of the Catholic religion and, therefore, of her erudite voice.

In the author's account, the Catholic religion is the main advocate of civilisation. This is most evident in her reiterative comparison with the Moorish invaders where her orientalisising discourse surfaces. Acosta de Samper engages in the orientalist discourse as theorised by Edward Said; she constructs a feminised, sensual and decadent Oriental against which she opposes the virtuous Christian. Acosta de Samper begins, as she phrases it, "to study the Arabs" (I 238) with an account of the history of the Arab empire since the beginning of Islam in the Arabic peninsula until the Arab expansion into the Iberian Peninsula in the VIII century (I 243-247). She continues her "study" of the Arabs with the history of Granada, its establishment, the arrival of the Moors, the different reigns which flourished during three centuries before their expulsion in 1492 (II 14). Her scholarship of the history of the Arabs and Islam having been established, she can then pass value judgments on them in order to establish the greatness of her own religion.

Islam, in the author's "study", was created "á halagar las pasiones y predominantes vicios de los Arabes, los cuales no podían comprender la divinidad de Cristo ni abrazar sus leyes. Mahoma, sin embargo, modificó en mucho los malos instintos de aquellas tribus, y logró sacar todo el provecho posible de sus cualidades naturales" [to flatter the passions and predominant vices of the Arabs, which could not understand the divinity of Christ nor

embrace His laws. Mahomet, however, modified many of the bad instincts of those tribes and was able to take advantage of their natural qualities] (I 244). For this reason, she juxtaposes the Christian tradition to the Muslim tradition in the following way:

Acabábamos de visitar los dominios de la raza goda; habíamos admirado las catedrales católicas y contemplado los tesoros reunidos para dar culto á Dios, con aquella fe ciega de los hijos de la Edad Media; tocábanos ahora visitar los monumentos que dejaron en España los enemigos del Cristianismo, las obras de los voluptuosos musulmanes, adoradores de la materia y que sólo buscaban delicias terrestres.

[We had just visited the dominions of the Goths; we had admired the Catholic cathedrals and contemplated the treasures united to honour God, with that blind faith of the sons of the Middle Ages; we now had to visit the monuments left in Spain by the enemies of Christianity, the works of the voluptuous Muslims, worshipers of material things and seekers of worldly pleasures.] (I 237)

One such monument is the Alhambra, which, ironically, she describes by quoting a Moorish traveller of the thirteenth century (II 21).

Acosta de Samper's discourses are ambivalent. On the one hand she orientalises the Arab people: she describes them as barbarous and voluptuous; they are filled with passions, vices and bad instincts; they love material and terrestrial pleasures; they are the enemies of Christianity. But on the other hand, she considers their culture admirable enough to quote one of its writers. Furthermore, she states "La mayor parte de los hombres que se dedicaban á la literatura, eran protegidos por los soberanos que moraban en la Alhambra, y en prueba de ello, mandaban esculpir sus versos y sentencias filosóficas en los muros del palacio" [the majority of the men dedicated to literature were protected by the sovereigns who lived in the Alhambra, and as proof of this, they sculpted their verses and philosophical sentences in the walls of the palace] (II 26). She admires the beauty of the Moorish constructions and their "marvellous architectural harmony" (I 251) as well as the comfort of their architecture (II 42).

Nevertheless, Acosta de Samper has to justify the defeat of Islam and so has to incorporate the “barbarity” of Islam in her discourse. She writes, “A la vista del palacio artístico y de la poesía que encierra éste, bueno es contemplar también la sombra sangrienta que dejaron allí aquellos déspotas orientales, los cuales unían al amor de los goces el sentimiento de la más refinada crueldad” [At the sight of the artistic palace and the poetry enclosed within it is also important to contemplate the bloody shadow left there by those Oriental despots, who joined the love of pleasure to a most refined cruelty] (II 37) and declares their incompetence in administering justice (II 41). Consequently, the triumph of Christianity over these cruel despots was just:

Se comprende que á la larga, entre un pueblo enervado por los goces y afeminado con una vida regalada y material, y otro que había endurecido su cuerpo y fortificado su alma con sacrificios, que tenía puesto su corazón en una vida futura mejor que la presente; se comprende que el primero tenía que claudicar y darse por vencido, y que el segundo había de triunfar y ganar terreno.

[It is understandable that in the long run, between a people weakened by enjoyment and effeminate with a comfortable and materialistic life and another which had hardened its body and fortified its soul with sacrifices, whose heart looked for a future life better than the present one; it is understandable that the first one had to give way and surrender and the second had to win and conquer.] (I 239).

She contrasts the “spiritual retreat”, the “mansion of peace and tranquillity” that invites “spiritual meditation” --the archbishop of Granada’s country home-- with the mansions of the voluptuous Arabs (II 60).

In these references, Acosta de Samper compares, on the one hand, an austere, sacrificing Christianity where luxuries are only used as offerings to God, the virgin and the saints, and where priests live a simple and abstemious life. And, on the other hand, the voluptuousness of the Muslims, their rich and aesthetic architecture and their love of pleasure. There is a noticeable inconsistency in this juxtaposition since her descriptions of the luxuries, the wealth and the treasures of the churches contradict this conception of

Christianity. Nevertheless, her construction of Catholicism as civilised, in relation to Islam, is yet another way of asserting her identity and assimilating herself as a virtuous Christian.

Within the context of these representations of powerful institutions such as the Catholic Church, Acosta de Samper, along with her historical narrations, refers to other cultural institutions which create yet another source of power, knowledge. Her erudition is also revealed through references to poets, writers and artist, as when she mentions Cervantes (I 95) and her love for *Don Quixote* when she was a little girl (I 234). Along with her interest in architecture, Acosta de Samper also appreciates art and visits many museums. In Valladolid, the museum, closed that day, is opened specially for her and she is able to see works by Rubens, Correggio, Velásquez, Murillo and Rivera (I 97). In the museum in Madrid, she mentions works by Murillo, Velásquez, Zurbarán, Goya, Tiziano, Da Vinci, Durer and many others (II 229-235). However, her authoritative voice falters when she confesses, “de éstos no me atrevo á hacer la descripción por temor de decir alguna barbaridad, no siendo yo experta en cuestiones tan delicadas” [I don’t dare to offer a description of these for fear of committing a blunder since I am not an expert in such delicate matters] (II 232). The hesitation to describe these works of art, along with a few references to other travel books written before hers and which will be analysed below, are the only instances where Acosta de Samper shows any lack of authority in her narrative voice.

Artists, poets, writers and men of historical importance figure among the protagonists in Acosta de Samper’s text, but the figure of Columbus, allegory of the “civiliser”, is paramount in her visit to Valladolid: “En una de esas casas (...) nació Zorrilla, el poeta moderno más popular de España; allí vivió Cervantes, una de las más imperecederas glorias de la lengua española; allí murió Colón, que regaló un Mundo Nuevo á Europa,

para darla vida y prosperidad” [In one of these houses (...) Zorrilla was born, the most popular modern poet of Spain; over there Cervantes lived, another of the eternal glories of the Spanish language; Columbus died over there, who gave the New World to Europe to give it life and prosperity] (I 101-102). Resembling the countess of Merlin’s admiration for Columbus, where America is also portrayed as a gift to Europe, Acosta de Samper views him as the hero, “the Discoverer” (II 99) who brought “civilisation” to the new world. The interest in the figure of Columbus pervades the text; in Huelva, she exclaims, “[Parecíanos ver al Grande Almirante sentado allí, estudiando, en la carta levantada por él, la ruta que debería seguir al través del tenebroso y desconocido Océano!” [We imagined seeing the Great Admiral seated there, studying the chart drawn by him, the route that he would take through the dark and unknown Ocean!] (II 102). At the Convent of La Rábida, she explains, “Nadie ignora, creo que aquel antiguo monasterio franciscano fue el teatro de varios pasajes de la vida de Cristóbal Colón” [Nobody ignores the fact that the ancient Franciscan monastery was the theatre of various moments of Columbus’ life] (II 107) and she describes how Columbus prepared for his voyage until his departure for the unknown on 3 August 1492 (II 126-129).

Acosta de Samper is not interested in the landscape, of which there are few descriptions; it only interests her as a historicised background, as the setting of battles, castles, and pilgrimages. A teleological vision of History and institutions of power (churches, monuments, palaces and so forth) is not only important because these organise society hierarchically, but also because they give Acosta de Samper a place in that society, a sense of identity, since her identity lies within the belief in those structures of power.

Part of the power that Acosta de Samper assumes lies in the academic inflection of her writing (“study the Arabs”), her frequent references to erudite men and sometimes women

and her objective tone. However, the travelogue (and the historical novels Acosta de Samper undertook in her later years) requires little authority and are thus genres available to women, unlike “factual” writing (like history and scientific writing) which requires great “authorising” (Mills, *Discourses of Difference* 81). She resorts to a genre which is considered accessible to her gender but she presents it with a scientific and authoritative narrative voice. Moreover, Acosta de Samper’s voyage is informed by a “strong testimonial stance” (she was there, she saw, she witnessed), a common trait in autobiographical writing in Spanish America (Molloy 8). Another common trait is the topic of autobiography as history, as Molloy states (139), therefore, Acosta de Samper’s travelogue, a public document endowed with historical and moral significance was hence not unlike her husband’s *Galería nacional de hombres ilustres o notables, o sea, colección de bocetos biográficos* (*National Gallery of Enlightened or Notable Men, that is, Collection of Biographical Sketches*), published in Bogotá in 1879 (Molloy 147).

It is worth noting that the writer’s use of the “classics” and her selection of old buildings and painting both situates Spain as past and as authoritative tradition. Her parading of such aspects suggests both her superior class and learning and her relative “newness” as a wonder-struck colonial tourist. As Molloy declares “the autobiographer would not be caught lacking, culturally disarmed, an intellectual simpleton in the eyes of others, thus the showy preference for ‘the classics’” (22).

Recovering the Bonds of Filial Affection

Four centuries after Christopher Columbus left Spain, Soledad Acosta de Samper stands at the same spot where the “discoverer” sailed for the new world. She has come to Spain as representative of the country which was to be named after him, the Republic of Colombia,

at the commemoration of *his* “discovery” of the New World. He is a remarkable hero to her, a part of her history, and so the participation in this commemoration was probably a great source of pride to Acosta de Samper. Hence, most of the second volume of her work is dedicated to the description of this commemoration: its conferences, exhibitions and celebrations.

She explains, for example, that for the Historical Exhibition the republics of the New World were asked to bring ethnographical objects that were there at the moment of discovery with the intention of showing the “industriousness of the peoples of both continents” (II 208). She mentions the different collections and asserts that the indigenous cultures of the countries of the Southern Cone were not as civilised as the Aztecs, the Incas or the Chibchas (the native inhabitants that lived in Colombia) (II 216). In contrast, she very proudly states that the most valuable collection comes from Colombia since, “A más de colecciones de cerámica y objetos de arte, Colombia procuró enviar especialmente muestras de las riquezas de su suelo, y manifestar que en la época de la conquista española los aborígenes conocían las minas de oro, plata y esmeraldas que había en su suelo y sabían beneficiarlas” [Besides the collections of ceramics and art objects, Colombia sent special samples of its soil’s richness to demonstrate that in the period of the Spanish conquest, the Aborigines mined gold, silver and emeralds in their soil and knew how to use them] (II 213). And then just as proudly she announces that the entire collection was given to Spain by Colombia as “evidence of its filial affection” (II 214).⁵ The author hence embraces her

⁵ The “gift” which Acosta de Samper refers to here was a collection of 122 gold pieces of indigenous craft known as the Quimbaya treasure, which had just been “discovered”. When Queen Cristina received this from the government of Colombia, she exclaimed, “Yo siempre creí que vuestro país era fabuloso en bienes artísticos, pero veo que lo es aun mas en la nobleza e hidalguía de sus gentes” [I always believed that your country held fabulous artistic treasures, but now I see it is even richer in the nobility and generosity of its people]. President Jorge Holguín gave this treasure to thank Spain for the favourable position it took towards Colombian interests in a frontier dispute. See “Oro colombiano en manos extranjeras” (online).

national identity and by differentiating her country from the rest of the countries of America, it associates with Spain by way of “filial affection”.

The numerous references to “filial affection” in the text appear as a recurring discourse both for Creoles as for Spaniards; both, as we will see, were re-evaluating, and in this sense trying to recover, the bonds that were severed during independence. For this reason Acosta de Samper constantly highlights the similarities between her *patria* and Spain as in the following example, “A cada paso en España nos encontramos con recuerdos de la ausente patria, y no podemos negar que somos hijas legítimas de la Península ibérica, no solamente por los defectos de que adolecemos, sino también por las cualidades que hemos heredado de nuestra madre” [At every step in Spain we find memories of the absent fatherland and we cannot deny that we are legitimate daughters of the Iberian peninsula, not only because of the defects that we suffer, but also because of the qualities we have inherited from our mother] (I 216). For the author, there is a solid bond between Spain and its ex-colonies, which must be studied “objectively”. In other words the Spanish heritage has to be evaluated both for the qualities it left in the Americas but also for the defects. In this sense the author is also “researching” Spain through her journey and text in order to establish this knowledge which, she believes, will be useful to the future of the new republic. In this study, then, she is also fashioning herself as an erudite with an academic purpose; to study Spain and its past, in order to understand the present of America and thus aid in the construction of its future.

As participant in the commemoration ceremonies, Acosta de Samper, as already mentioned, represented Colombia in three conferences: the *IX Congreso Internacional de Americanistas* (IX International Congress of Americanists) in Huelva, the *Congreso Pedagógico Hispano-Lusitano-Americano* (Pedagogical Hispanic-Lusitanian-American Congress) and the

Congreso Literario Hispano-Americano (Hispanic-American Literary Congress), the last two held in Madrid. These conferences are interesting for they emphasise the use of “filial affection” as a discourse between the Americans and the Spaniards. For example, in the *Congreso de Americanistas* where various historical, archaeological, anthropological and ethnographical papers about the New Continent were read (including two papers by Soledad Acosta de Samper) (II 134), a Spanish speaker proclaims:

que lo mismo desde las cumbres andinas que en los campos patagónicos y que en las cuencas del Plata y del Amazonas; allí, en suma, en donde se pronuncia el nombre de España, allí nace inmediatamente el cariño hacia nuestra patria. (...) pero al decir español se sienten emocionados todos los americanos, á cuyos pueblos yo saludo en nombre de la religión franciscana y de España.

[the same from the Andean summits as in the Patagonian fields and in the basins of the Plata and the Amazons; there, in sum, where the name of Spain is pronounced, there spontaneously affection for our land is born. (...) upon saying Spaniard, all Americans feel moved, to these people I salute in the name of the Franciscan religion and of Spain] (II 119)

This speaker, a bishop, also asserts that he has verified this love of Spain even in the peaks of the Andes, at heights of 16,000 feet above sea level, in such places where you can hardly even breathe (II 119). Another example of “filial affection” is found when Ricardo Palma, representing Peru, declares the gratitude of the “daughters of Spain towards the Mother Land” for the invitation to the celebration of the fourth centenary of the discovery (II 118), while Acosta de Samper mentions the “feeling of fraternity that united Spain and America in those solemn moments” (II 121) of the commemoration.

At the Literary Congress, whose American delegates included prominent writers like Rubén Darío from Nicaragua and Juan Zorrilla de San Martín from Uruguay, there are also references to “filial affection”. The goal of the congress, as stated in the opening speeches, is to promote the preservation of the Spanish language in order to recover “el puesto preeminente debido á una raza numerosa, inteligente y emprendedora, que entre sus empresas cuenta la de haber descubierto y civilizado un mundo” [the pre-eminent

position due to a numerous, intelligent and entreprenuring race that counts among its deeds the discovery and civilisation of a world] (II 177). The development and conservation of the “glorious language of Cervantes” which is a “great deed of civilisation” (II 183-184) is clearly a project supported by institutions of power, therefore, the audience at the congress is reminded of the participation of the Church in the discovery of America. Great emphasis is also placed on the hope that, “las Repúblicas hispano-americanas continuasen, como lo habian declarado en aquellas hermosas fiestas, tan amantes de su madre España como ella lo era de aquellas á quienes había dado el sér” [the Hispanic American republics continued as they have declared in these famous celebrations, loving their mother Spain as she loved those to whom she had given being] (II 185). For the Spaniards, then, language is their last hold over America, since they had lost most of its colonies (it is also a source of comfort for it reminds them of their past glories), therefore, there is a need to emphasise the preservation of the “purity” of the language as well as on America’s “filial affection” for Spain.

For the American delegates, naturally, their language is also a source of great concern; they demonstrate that people from the ex-colonies can speak Castilian as well as anyone from the peninsula (II 186). Ricardo Palma requests that words of common use in Peru be admitted in the language (II 188), while a representative of Honduras claims that the only way to maintain the purity of the Castilian language in America is through a frequent migration of Spaniards to the new republics (II 188). Consequently, there are competing opinions on the way to preserve the Spanish language since, on the one hand, Palma asks for a recognition of its changing nature and, on the other, the Honduran delegate (and the Spaniards) asks for the preservation of its “purity”. Though not stated in her travelogue, Acosta de Samper agreed with Palma; she defended the use and inclusion of Americanisms before the guardian of the Spanish language, the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española* (Royal

Academy of the Spanish Language) (Vallejo, online). Despite this, she states in her travelogue, “El lenguaje en España es mucho más rico que entre nosotros, y todos hacen uso de muchas más palabras que en las antiguas colonias” [The language in Spain is much richer than among us and everyone uses many more words than in the former colonies] (I 228).

These diverse opinions are examples of the discussions not just on the matter of the Spanish language, but also on the relationship to the former colonial power that existed at a time when the ex-colonies had begun to re-evaluate their Hispanic heritage. It is not surprising then, that Acosta de Samper is disappointed with the congresses and their sterile conclusions. She criticises all of them and believes they are useless because too many unlearned people are called to speak thus wasting the time of those who can produce practical results (II 192), --that is the erudite. Acosta de Samper has another objection to the commemoration; she observes the continued resentment of the Spaniards towards the Americans:

A pesar del fondo innegable de bondad con que fuimos tratados los americanos invitados por la Madre Patria, para asistir á las fiestas del Centenario del Descubrimiento de América; á pesar de la extraordinaria hospitalidad con que es recibido el extranjero en Madrid, y del evidente deseo de servir y de obsequiar al hijo que en un tiempo se rebeló contra la autoridad de España, no se le ha perdonado, no obstante, con completa sinceridad, y muchas veces inconscientemente se traslucía el amargo resentimiento que mora todavía en el corazón del vencido en las lides de la libertad. (...) en las conversaciones familiares, en los discursos improvisados, de repente una palabra, una exclamación nos demostraba que aún los más entusiastas *americanistas*, no habían olvidado las quejas que tenían contra la emancipación de sus antiguas hijas.

[Despite the kindness with which, we, the Americans invited to take part in the celebration of the Centenary of the Discovery of America, were treated by the Motherland; despite the extraordinary hospitality with which the foreigner is received in Madrid, and the evident desire to serve and to give to the son that once rebelled against the authority of Spain, he has not been forgiven, however, with complete sincerity, and sometimes unconsciously, a bitter resentment was noticeable in the hearts of the defeated in the fight for freedom. (...) in familiar conversations, in improvised discourses, suddenly a word, an exclamation showed

us that even the most enthusiastic *Americanists*, have not forgotten the complaints against the emancipation of their former daughters.] (I 225-226)

She believes that the so-called *americanistas* are only interested in pre-Columbian and some conquest and colonisation history, but that they refuse to deal with the independence period (I 226).

Acosta de Samper cannot understand why the proud Spaniards do not realise that their ex-colonies rebelled against them precisely because they had inherited ideas about liberty and independence from them. She states, “Olvidan que el espíritu español es el que en América prevalece, puesto que los antiguos colonos bebieron en las mismas fuentes de civilización. ¿Por qué, pues, enfurecerse con el resultado de la revolución de la independencia, si somos hijos de un mismo tronco?” [They forget that the Spanish spirit is the one that prevails in America since the colonists drank from the same fountains of civilisation. Why then get enraged with the results of the revolutions of independence when we are descendants of the same lineage?] (I 226-227). Throughout the text, the author insists on the affiliation between America and Spain, --this “filial affection”-- which should be enough to forget resentment in order to consolidate bonds for the future. Acosta de Samper re-evaluates the bonds between Spain and America; first, because the re-evaluation of the Hispanic heritage was a relevant discourse of her time and second, because it is yet another way for her to present her erudition and thus her academic self-fashioning. Hence, the author tries to present an objective evaluation of Spain where both her qualities and defects are examined and by doing so she reinforces the impersonal voice of the objective scholar/observer.

The Inevitable Dichotomy: Civilisation versus Barbarism

To this moment in the argument, Spain is considered for its history and religion and for the legacy which these institutions left in the ex-colonies which undoubtedly are still connected to the motherland by the bonds of “filial affection”. The relationship between the metropolis and its ex-colonies is also reiterated in the text through a series of comparisons which are an example of the dichotomic discourse of barbarism versus civilisation which so pervaded the writings of nineteenth-century intellectuals. Spain can occupy either one of these polarities depending on the comparison made by the author.

By way of illustration, when Acosta de Samper mentions her concern with alcoholism in her country, she claims that this vice --so common in South America-- was definitely not inherited from the Spaniards; “¡Ojalá hubiéramos heredado esta sobriedad en América, de nuestros antepasados europeos!...cuando, la verdad sea dicha, el vicio de la bebida, legado por los aborígenes del Nuevo Mundo, es el vicio que más daño hace entre la gente del pueblo (y también en la que se considera de estirpe más elevada) y lo que muchas veces impide que la civilización tome pie entre nosotros” [If only we had inherited the sobriety of our European ancestors in America!.. the truth is that the vice of drinking, a legacy of the Aborigines of the New World, is the most harmful vice among the people (and also of the higher classes) and which repeatedly prevents the penetration of civilisation among us] (I 229-230). In this view, alcoholism which was not inherited from the Spaniards, impedes the penetration of civilisation among her compatriots. She also sees the lack of civilisation in things such as the system of royal roads that the Americas failed to inherit from Spain (I 40), or in the architecture of the houses of Seville, copied in South America, which she believes are much more beautiful and more luxurious than their imitations (II 68). To

Acosta de Samper, her country is in many ways a poor copy of Spain, which then embodies a superior civilisation.

However, since Acosta de Samper's examination of the colonial legacy aims at objectivity, it is not always a favourable outcome for Spain. There are situations where Colombia is more civilised. When she goes to see the *zarzuela*, she denounces the rudeness of the audience; "Esto me consoló mucho, porque me probó que ya en Bogotá hay más cultura y buena crianza, que en la capital de las Españas. Debemos aquí hacer justicia á América; y si no dejo de señalar los defectos propios y heredados de que adolecemos, tampoco debo dejar pasar las cualidades que tenemos en las Repúblicas del Nuevo Mundo" [This was a consolation because it proved to me that there is more culture and good manners in Bogotá than in the capital of Spain. We must be just to America here and if I show both our own as well as inherited defects, I also show the positive qualities of the republics of the New World] (I 231). The author wishes to be just to Colombia, as well as to the rest of America, in the evaluation of the Spanish heritage. Colombia is, on the one hand, a bad imitation of Spain (it is the "daughter", rescued from Indian barbarism and civilised by Spain). Spain, however, is not the most advanced civilisation in Acosta de Samper's view; it is in some ways more backward than Colombia.

In fact, other prominent intellectuals in Colombia, among which figure Acosta de Samper's husband, José María Samper and other political thinkers such as Sergio Arboleda, viewed Spain as backward in comparison to more "civilised" societies primarily represented by France and England (Jaramillo, 66).⁶ Thus, France, England and

⁶ José María Samper, the author's husband, wrote a famous essay; *Ensayo sobre las revoluciones políticas y la condición social de las repúblicas colombianas (Hispano-Americanas)* (*Essay on the Political Revolutions and the Social Condition of the Colombian Republics (Hispanic-American)*), in which he analysed the negative aspects of the Spanish heritage while his brother, Miguel Samper, another intellectual, wrote an essay with similar analytical intentions. See Jaramillo (64).

increasingly the United States were regarded as models of political and economic development for the new nations. For the most part, the nineteenth-century Creole, as evidenced in Sarmiento's writings, shared this view; "‘barbarism’ consisted simultaneously of ‘indigenous societies’ (...) slave and ex-slave populations, and traditional Spanish colonial society, autocratic, conservative and religious and the mixing of the three" (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 186). Thus, conforming to the discourses of her time, for Acosta de Samper the rest of Europe, specifically France and England, have progressed towards civilisation at a faster pace than Spain. Nevertheless, Spain's value, as we have seen, lies in its historical heritage as well as in the fact that it brought religion to America.

The configuration of Acosta de Samper's discourse on civilisation is not complete without comparisons between Spain and the rest of Europe. One such interesting contrast appears when the author, in her role of educated woman, is critical of the situation of women in Spain. This is an excellent opportunity for her to criticise Spain's backwardness for Spanish men, according to her, do not show the women appropriate respect and consideration. For example, she is appalled at the way a man, from any social class, can, with impunity, flatter the lady of the highest lineage he finds in the street:

Entre tanto la tan decantada galantería española es más de apariencia que de realidad. La mujer en la Península es poco respetada, ni de joven ni de anciana. A la primera la *adoran*, pero la tratan con una familiaridad que nos sorprende á los americanos, que estamos enseñados á otras costumbres; á la segunda la tratan con completa indiferencia. Delante de señoras se habla de todo y con una libertad increíble; se fuma en los salones, y en la mesa de los mejores hoteles los caballeros sacan el cigarro y arrojan el humo á la cara de sus vecinas, sin ocurrírseles que es aquello una falta de buena crianza. Hablo aquí de las costumbres que los viajeros alcanzan á ver de paso; otros son los usos entre las clases elevadas que han viajado, en donde las costumbres son iguales á las de Francia é Inglaterra, Rusia y Alemania.

[Meanwhile the praised gallantry of the Spaniards is more an appearance than reality. Peninsular women are not respected in their youth or in their elder years. The former they *adore*, but they treat her with a familiarity that is surprising for the Americans, since we are used to other customs; the latter they treat with complete indifference. They speak about everything in front of the ladies with incredible

liberty; they smoke in the salons; and in the tables of the best hotels the gentleman take out their cigars and throw smoke into the faces of their female neighbours, without thinking that it is bad manners. I am talking about the customs that the travellers can see on their way; it is different among the higher classes that have travelled and whose customs are equal to those of France, England, Russia and Germany.] (I 223-224)

She concludes that in Colombia, society, even among people who have an average education, is much more respectful of women from all social classes (I 224). Colombian society is more advanced than Spanish society in their treatment of women and it is therefore much closer to the civilisation of France, England, Russia and Germany. Acosta de Samper, as will be seen later, devotes a part of her text to the issue of women being very critical of their situation in Spain; she alleges, for example, that at the pedagogical congress, the discussion about women's education took on a tone that bore more similarity to the Orient's ideas about women, than to a civilised country of Europe (I 224). Since Acosta de Samper's view of the Orient has already been shown, with this remark it is understood that those ideas are opposed to civilisation.

Another comparison arises between Spain and France; the inhabitant of Madrid is indomitable, noisy and idle while "En París la gente se divierte pero lo hace después de haber trabajado para ganar los medios; en Madrid sólo se trabaja cuando no se puede menos, y para sus pobladores divertirse es el único objeto de la vida" [In Paris people have fun but only after working to earn their livelihood; people only work in Madrid when there is nothing else to do and having fun is the only objective of life] (I 220). By contrast, the inhabitants of Bilbao are industrious and lack the inertia and laziness that prevent other parts of Spain, from progressing towards civilisation since "con dificultad España, que anda siempre despacio, podrá alcanzar á las otras naciones que le han tomado la delantera" [Spain, who has always been slow, will hardly be able to reach the other nations who are so far advanced] (I 31). Acosta de Samper constantly shows evidence of Spain's

backwardness throughout her text as when she complains of the dirt and the beggars in Santiago de Compostela (I 154) which prevent the travellers from enjoying its artistic monuments. She also comments on the excessive number of beggars at the church doors in San Sebastian and declares that this does not happen in Colombia (I 9).

The beggars, never one beggar, but a mass, a multitude, an army of this “human plague” (II 8), which in addition to the gypsies (II 48), attack, assault, pester and interrupt the traveller (I 74 and 154) are also symbols of Spain’s barbarism. Acosta de Samper explains the reason for so many beggars; “La pereza, la inacción... ésta es la llaga oculta de que sufren en España todos, grandes y pequeños, ilustrados é ignorantes. La pereza inveterada, el dejarlo todo para el día siguiente, la informalidad, el desperdiciar el tiempo como si la vida fuese interminable: esto es lo que forma las costumbres, con pocas excepciones, de todas las jerarquías sociales” [sloth, idleness... such is the hidden wound which everyone, big and small, enlightened and ignorant, suffers in Spain. Inveterate sloth, to leave everything for the next day, the informality, to waste time as though life was endless: this is what shapes the customs, with few exceptions, of all the social hierarchies] (I 201). It is evident in this quotation that the author uses the same discourse, which the Countess of Merlin presents as the reason for Cuba’s primitivism, in order to demonstrate the backwardness of Spain. Although writing half a century apart –Merlin being first -- both authors use the same words: idle, inert, indomitable and dirty in their descriptions; in addition to this, they both view the countries they visit as frozen in time, in the Middle Ages.

During her visit to Santiago de Compostela, Acosta de Samper confesses that she did not travel to Spain to find modern progress which can readily be found in France and England (I 196). To her, “Lo respetable en España, lo interesante, lo que agrada, es aquello que

conserva todavía el sabor característico de la Edad Media; los recuerdos de sus glorias; de la fe cristiana que tantas hazañas les inspiraron; las costumbres que eran las mismas en toda Europa hace algunos siglos, y que sólo allí se conservan vivas” [the respectable, the interesting, the agreeable in Spain is that which preserves the characteristic flavour of the Middle Ages, the memories of its glories; of the Christian faith which inspired so much prowess; the customs which were the same in all of Europe some centuries back and which are only preserved alive there] (I 197). To illustrate this point further she adds:

Así, pues, lo repetimos, en estos recuerdos de España el lector hallará pocas veces relatos de lo moderno que se ha ingertado en ese país, casi a su pesar; no encontrará sino cuadros de todo lo más viejo que he encontrado en el hogar de mis antepasados, de aquello que llevaron á América y dejaron allí al tiempo de retirarse. ¡Cosa curiosa! Apesar de ser de la misma raza, pues la parte indígena de las Repúblicas sudamericanas no tiene influencia sino cuando se amalgama con la europea, á pesar de descender del mismo tronco los españoles del día han conservado exactamente las mismas costumbres de las cuales nos hablaban nuestros padres; mientras que nosotros, al menos en Colombia, estamos mucho más adelantados, y hemos imitado más bien la civilización francesa é inglesa, que hemos guardado las tradiciones de nuestros mayores.

[And so we repeat, in these memories of Spain the reader will find few accounts of the modern which has entered this country almost against its will, he will only find pictures of all the old that has been found in the home of my ancestors of that which they took to America and left there at the moment of their departure. A curious thing! Despite belonging to the same race, since the indigenous part of the South American republics has no influence unless mixed with the European, although descendants of the same lineage the Spaniards of today have preserved the exact same customs which our parents talked about; meanwhile we, at least in Colombia, are much more developed, and we have imitated instead the French and English civilisation rather than kept the traditions of our elders.] (I 197)

Acosta de Samper visits Spain as though visiting a museum, a historical relic of the past, which is also her historical past. In her vision the Creole is more dynamic than the Spaniard since he embraced the more advanced cultures of France and England and is advancing towards the civilisation they embody at a faster pace. Thus he, as noble descendant of Spaniards, is a modern, enlightened and civilised version of his, now backward, ancestors. However, Acosta de Samper cannot fully discredit the old colonial

power, since thanks to it America received the true civilised faith, the Catholic religion which is such an important part of her discourse.

Acosta de Samper's Equality of the Classes

Acosta de Samper's discourse on the superior civilisation of America as compared to Spain is reinforced by her views on the equality of the classes. Upon her arrival in the Basque country, for instance, she is impressed by their egalitarian society in which their leader, who is never called a king, is just to all rich and poor, humble and powerful (I 16). She admires them since they are egalitarian and unimpressed by wealth: "No han llevado títulos ni los apetecen, porque los Vascongados se han considerado siempre iguales entre sí, y aman demasiado su independencia y libertad para admitir un distintivo que humille á unos y exalte á otros" [They have not used titles or desired them because the Basques have always considered themselves the equal of each other, and they love their independence and freedom too much to admit a title which humiliates some and exalts others] (I 19).

In stark contrast, at the reception held in the palace at the end of all the commemoration festivities, Acosta complains of the royal entourage and court etiquette affirming, "Este espectáculo era curioso para nosotras, hijas de una República en donde todos somos iguales, y en donde no hay distinciones de rango que obliguen á una anciana respetable ó un caballero de edad á recibir con la cabeza inclinada las órdenes de otro sér humano, sólo porque la cuna de éste ha sido mecida en un palacio real" [This spectacle was curious for us, daughters of a Republic where we are all equal, and where there are no distinctions which oblige a respectable elder woman or man to bow while receiving orders from another human being, only because the latter has been cradled in a royal palace] (II 263).

In this passage, Acosta reinforces and affirms the idea of the enlightened egalitarianism of

America as opposed to the aristocratic customs that Spain preserves. The occasion of the reception in the palace is well employed by Acosta to make a comment on the future of the aristocracy and the slow penetration of democracy in “antique societies” like the Spanish:

A pesar de que la aristocracia de la sangre empieza á perder un tanto su prestigio en todo Europa, y que sólo se conservan ciertas ceremonias casi simbólicas en las Cortes de los Reyes, las ideas democráticas calan muy despacio en estas sociedades antiguas en donde todavía se pagan mucho de los títulos y pagan por llevarlos también, puesto que se venden y se compran. Gran parte de las familias hidalgas tienen ya mezcla de otras razas; se injerta en ellas la sangre plebeya de millonarios, y redoran sus blasones con el dinero de los ricos americanos que vienen á gozar de las ventajas de esta avanzada civilización europea. Se democratiza paulatinamente la sociedad, y el fin del venidero siglo verá cambios portentosos en el mundo. ¿La pérdida de las prerrogativas de los nobles será provechosa para el mundo, ó lo contrario?...nadie lo puede decir. Hoy parece como si simplemente se cambiara de decoración; y si los nobles pierden sus antiguos privilegios, en cambio los obreros piden exenciones para sí mismos, y á gritos exigen que se les trate con miramientos en que jamás habían pensado antes. Tan cierto es que el hombre no ha nacido para la igualdad, á pesar de lo mucho que se ha predicado ésta desde la disociadora Revolución francesa del fin del siglo pasado.

[Although the aristocracy of blood begins to lose its prestige in all of Europe, and only certain symbolic ceremonies are preserved in the royal courts, the democratic ideas permeate these old societies slowly – societies in which titles are still very respected and are bought and sold. The majority of the noble families already have mixed blood; the plebeian blood of millionaires penetrates them and they gild their coats of arms with the money of rich Americans that come to enjoy the advantages of this advanced European civilisation. Society democratises slowly, and the end of the coming century will witness extraordinary changes in the world. Will the loss of the advantages of the nobles be fruitful for the world or not? ...Nobody can tell. It seems today as if the background simply changed and if the nobility loses its old privileges, the workers instead ask for exemptions for themselves and demand privileges which they have never thought about. It is also true that men are not born for equality, despite it being preached since the dissociative French revolution of the past century.] (II 264-265)

Despite Acosta de Samper's defence of democracy she is also a firm believer in social hierarchies, which were quite common in Spain as she considers, “el amor á los títulos es tal, que no se lo rebaja ninguno que lo tenga, ni aun cuando esté alternando con personas de su casa: el Duque, el Marqués, el conde, es Duque, Marqués y Conde siempre, hasta para sus más allegados parientes” [the love of titles is such that everyone uses them even at

home, the Duke, the Marquis; the Count is Duke, Marquis and Count always, even for its closest relatives] (I 223).

Acosta de Samper's contradictory stance between the goodness of democracy and the need for social hierarchies is most explicitly revealed in her complaints about the familiarity with which the nobles and lower classes treat each other in Madrid. Consider the following:

El descendiente de la familia de sangre más azul apretará la mano á cualquier torero ó miserable *quidam* que á su paso le habla. No tiene empacho en chancearse con los sirvientes de los cafés que frecuenta y en sufrir las familiaridades de éstos en los lugares públicos. De aquí resulta que los criados y criadas dejan mucho que desear, y la libertad de que gozan éstos impide tener orden en las casas de familia.

[The descendent of the family of the noblest blood shakes the hand of any toreador or miserable *quidam* that speaks to him. He does not hesitate to joke with the servants in the cafes he frequents and to suffer the familiarity of these in public places. Consequently the servants are inadequate and the freedom they enjoy makes it difficult to keep order in the family houses.] (I 222-223)

While democracy symbolises the advancement of civilisation and equality appears to be a desirable feature, Acosta de Samper seems to acknowledge at the same time the need to preserve social categories in society in order for it to function properly. In Acosta de Samper's view the ideal of the French Revolution appears to be unreachable and her position on the future of the worker's movement is almost sceptical.

In general, Acosta de Samper's attitude towards the issue of class or social category is strictly hierarchical, despite her effort to represent her country as democratic and egalitarian. This conflict is also evoked in her fiction, as Ordóñez notes: "The novel [*Un chistoso de aldea*] evokes the typical conflict of Latin American Creoles, conflict (...) that the bourgeoisie to which Soledad Acosta belongs will inherit: they are against the Spanish colonial hegemony, but they yearn for people's obsequiousness" (Nueva Lectura 20). Therefore, the author's class identity is clearly represented by her in her text; she is the

daughter of an Independence general and hence belongs to the elite of Colombian society. For this reason she has such privileges as being called to represent her country at the centenary commemoration. Her other obvious privilege is her remarkable access to an education which permits her to identify herself as an intellectual.

The Equality of the Sexes? Or the vulnerability of two women travelling alone

In 1895, Soledad Acosta de Samper published *La mujer en la sociedad moderna* (Women in modern society) in which she presented “ejemplos de mujeres que han vivido para el trabajo propio, que no han pensado que la única misión de la mujer es la de mujer casada, y han logrado por vías honradas prescindir de la necesidad absoluta del matrimonio, idea errónea y perniciosa que es el fondo de la educación al estilo antiguo” [examples of women who have lived for their own work, who have not thought that the only mission of women is that of the married woman and who, through honourable ways, had avoided the absolute need of marriage, this wrong and harmful idea which is the base of old fashioned education] (Acosta de Samper in Guerra 365). The idea that a woman could study and work in a profession without depending solely on marriage as the only purpose in her life was, by the standards of Acosta de Samper’s era, a radical one. For this reason, she has often been hailed as a feminist by literary criticism in Colombia.⁷ Whether a feminist or not, she believed, like every Christian did, that the greatest goal for a woman was marriage. However, she recognised that not all women were able to achieve such a goal and that some married the wrong man and for this reason society should provide women with the means to confront different social circumstances (Rodríguez-Arenas 147). For Acosta de Samper this means was the education of women.

Since the education of women is one of author's main concerns she takes advantage of any situation in which she can point out a remarkable woman. Thus one of the ways in which she constructs gender is by naming the erudite women she finds throughout her voyage. By way of illustration, she declares Rosalía Castro de Murgueitio, Galicia's most distinguished poetess and Emilia Pardo Bazán, its first woman prose writer both of whom are "gloria de la mujer española de este siglo" [glories of the Spanish women of this century] (I 191). In Madrid, she meets the Spanish writer Concepción Jimeno de Flaquer who reads a scholarly paper on Marina (Malinche), the Indian woman involved in Cortés' conquest of Mexico (II 238).

After quoting an Arab author from the thirteenth century who declares that the women of that era were ostentatious and vain, Acosta de Samper defends them by referring to a professor (Francisco Javier Simonet), who claims there were a number of women writers at the time of the Arab domination of Spain. She writes, "algunas de éstas se habían dedicado á la poesía, otras á la historia sagrada y profana; una (Leila), erudita notable, y otra (Mirien), notada por sus conocimientos en el arte musical; así, pues, no todas eran dadas á las vanidades y al lujo" [Some of these dedicated themselves to poetry, others to sacred and profane history; one (Leila) erudite and noteworthy and another (Mirien) known for her knowledge of the musical art; so then, not all were given to vanity and luxury] (II 26). In this view, even voluptuous and infidel Arab women can be revindicated on the condition of literacy. Acosta de Samper, who seems to be incapable of feeling compassion for the beggars in the street, can however sympathise with literate women even if they do not belong to her religion or her social class.

⁷ See for example, Gómez Ocampo, G. "El proyecto feminista de Soledad Acosta de Samper: análisis de *El corazón de la mujer*." In his *Entre María y La vorágine. La literatura colombiana finisecular (1886-1903)*.

Another example of this compassion is the episode of the erudite French woman whose luggage got lost on the way to Huelva and was unable to participate in the ceremonies that required formal attire. In spite of that she presented a paper on the origins of the name America, “Memoria que, diré de paso, fue pulverizada de una manera inhumana” [a paper, which I must say, was critiqued in an inhumane fashion] (II 97), at the *Congreso Americanista*. This incident gives her a chance to express her ideas on the limitations of her gender and she writes:

[S]i esta señora fuera joven y linda, si fuera rica, ostentosa y tuviera amigos, no hubiera faltado quien saliese á romper lanzas en su favor.... Decididamente las mujeres aún no pueden competir con los hombres en el mismo terreno; deben quedarse, por ahora, á la sombra hasta que los estudios serios y gimnasia intelectual de varias generaciones la hayan endurecido lo suficiente en lo moral como en lo físico. No nos es permitido todavía luchar con armas iguales; siempre necesitamos de las atenciones, de la caballerosidad del sexo fuerte, y para eso no bastan los méritos puramente intelectuales, es preciso gozar de cierta posición social y reconocidas prendas morales.

[If this lady were young and beautiful, if she were rich, flamboyant and had friends, there would have been someone to defend her.... Decidedly women cannot yet compete with men on the same ground; they must, for now, remain in the shadow until serious studies and intellectual gymnastics of various generations have strengthened her sufficiently both morally and physically. We are not yet allowed to fight with equal weapons; we always need the attention, the chivalry of the strong sex, and for this the purely intellectual merits are not enough, it is necessary to enjoy a certain social position and renowned moral qualities.] (II 98)

Since she is unable to defend the French woman in public, for only a man can protect her from such an attack, Acosta de Samper can be an advocate for a literate woman's rights at least on paper, by writing it in her text. She realises that the women of her time do not yet have adequate tools to fight for equality, that they need the protection of men and that it is not enough to have purely intellectual attributes. Only women who enjoy the privileges of the author's social class can achieve some recognition of equality especially if they are scholars like her.

Despite her social class and her privileges, Acosta de Samper, nevertheless, also feels the vulnerability of the French woman, although for a different reason. During the voyage, she realises the disadvantage of travelling alone with her daughter, without the protection of a male; “Nos encontrábamos dos mujeres solas en el fondo de aquellos riscos, un país extraño, sin amparo, sin que nadie que nos conociera supiese en donde nos hallábamos, y á la merced de aquellos hombres” [We were two women alone at the bottom of these gorges, in a strange country, without protection, without anybody knowing our whereabouts and at the mercy of those men] (I 145), she exclaims as she imagines the coach drivers are plotting to steal from them. Her daughter, on the other hand and the only time she speaks in the entire text, expresses excitement since an adventure with thieves is characteristic of Spain and she thinks that they would at least see something different (I 148). The drivers who do not rob them, nevertheless, do not obey her demands for promptness making this a painful episode for Acosta de Samper who is used to getting her way in everything and to being served with reverence.

Thanks to this frightful episode, the author remembers something she read in a travel account; “Recordé por primera vez, pues esta idea no me había venido antes, que estábamos en un rincón de España... ¡de esa España en donde habíamos leído que con frecuencia los salteadores atacan á los viajeros en los caminos reales, de cuyos lances están llenos los libros de viajes!” [I remembered for the first time, since this idea had not occurred to me before, that we were in a corner of Spain... of that Spain in which we had frequently read about the bandits that attacked the travellers in royal roads, and of these episodes the travel books are full] (I 145). Acosta de Samper often mentions other travel accounts (none written by women), for a means to strengthen her text; she often remembers having read this or that by another traveller, “Esto lo había leído yo en un libro de viajes” [I have read this in a travel book] (I 75) or “Recordaba entonces lo que había

leído en los viajes de un francés” [I remembered then what I had read in the travels of a Frenchman] (I 228). The references to other travel books reinforce her attitude of erudition, however, they also appear to contravene her authoritative voice.

The frequent references to other travel accounts reveal an agonising awareness of other more experienced travel writers, “tántas plumas cien veces mejores que la mía” [So many pens a hundred times better than mine] (II 79). At the moment of describing a monument or a city, she questions her descriptive abilities, as in the following examples. At the mosque in Cordoba she exclaims, “¿Me atreveré á hacer la descripción de lo que vimos? Es empresa no solamente difícil sino hasta imposible decir algo nuevo acerca de la mezquita, después de los muchos viajeros que han tratado el asunto con mano maestra” [Will I dare describe what I saw? It is not only difficult but impossible to say something new about the mosque after so many travellers have treated the matter in a masterly way] (I 252). Again at the Alhambra she declares, “¿Me atreveré acaso á hacer la descripción detallada de esa maravilla arquitectónica, después de la infinidad de viajeros que lo han hecho en todos los idiomas?” [Will I dare make a detailed description of this architectural wonder, after the infinity of travellers who have done it in all languages?] (II 21). She also refers to better travel writers in her descriptions of Seville (II 67) and of Toledo (II 195).

Although the author has devoted her entire travelogue to portraying a strong authoritative voice which shows not only historical, but literary and artistic erudition, with these frequent remarks, she acknowledges the need to refer to the male travel writer to add his authoritative voice to her text and so evidences the fear of the female writer who undertakes a task that lies in the realm of the masculine. Despite her conservative and Catholic ideology, for Acosta de Samper it was clear that the patriarchal organisation of society was problematic for women since it limited the roles available to her in society

(mother and wife, basically) (Guerra 365), and perhaps for this reason she chooses the references to travelogues and to history books to support her own voice. Acosta de Samper's view on the education of women also reveal these contradictory aspects, as Ordóñez notes:

[Education] in general is opposed to beauty, a beauty that, according to nineteenth century canons "withered" before age thirty. Education then served as a mechanism of social control and to transmit bourgeois and Catholic values, from sexual morals to domestic economy. But it is also a tool to economic independence and to be in contact with others. Soledad Acosta witnesses repression carried out through education, but an uneducated woman is even more repressed (...) (Nueva Lectura 22-23)

For this reason, the events that occurred at the Pedagogical Congress are a key to further understand the author's ideas on the education of women.

At the Pedagogical Congress, Acosta de Samper narrates the events of the session titled *Concepto y límites de la educación de la mujer, y de la aptitud profesional de ésta* (Concepts and limits of the education of women and her professional aptitude) (II 155) in which she read a paper written specifically for the conference. Before her turn to read, the writer Emilia Pardo Bazán, who is also part of the congress' organising committee, reads a paper, "en defensa del derecho y de las aptitudes de la mujer para desempeñar cargos públicos, hoy reservados exclusivamente al varón" [in defence of the right and aptitudes of women to occupy public positions, that are today exclusively reserved for men] (II 157).

By way of introduction to the discussion that followed Pardo Bazán's paper, Acosta de Samper explains, "En España se nota una oposición decidida contra todo lo que tienda á elevar á la mujer intelectualmente; y esto no sólo entre la mayor parte de los hombres de letras, salvo honrosas excepciones, sino también, triste es decirlo, entre las mismas mujeres" [There is a decided opposition in Spain to everything that tends to elevate women intellectually, not only among the majority of lettered men, with some exceptions,

but also, and it is sad to say it, among the women themselves] (II 157). A schoolteacher replies to Pardo Bazán's presentation with a speech that, according to Acosta de Samper, only served to humiliate the dignity of women. She summarises that speech; "Aseguré que aquélla sólo había nacido para agradar á éste, sin otra misión que aquélla en el mundo; dio á entender que la mujer sólo valía por sus encantos físicos, y que era preciso dejarle todo trabajo intelectual al varón, rey del universo" [She asserted that women had only been born to please men, with no other mission in the world; she made it clear that a woman's value lay in her physical charms, and that it was necessary to leave all intellectual work to the male, king of the universe] (II 158). The author watches with consternation how the audience gets excited and applauds her and she adds with sarcasm, "ciertamente no podían hacer menos en su favor los representantes de "el primero de los animales," como se intitula el *Hombre* en la Historia Natural" [certainly, the "first of the animals" as *Man* is named in Natural History could not do less in her favour] (II 159).

To add insult to injury, Acosta de Samper witnesses how an elderly man, director of one of the main universities of Spain, takes a turn to prove, with his knowledge of anatomy and medicine, the physical inferiority of women, "¡Como si la organización corporal de ésta tuviese algo que ver con su parte moral y con sus dotes intelectuales!" [As if the physical structure of a woman had something to do with her moral and intellectual gifts!] (II 159). But after telling us what she thinks of these vulgar and barbaric ideas she fails to make any comments in defence of Pardo Bazán to the audience itself. Instead she admits that when it is her turn to speak she, once again, is fearful. But her ideas, not being as radical as Pardo Bazán's, were accepted favourably (II 169). To end the episode she transcribes a part of Pardo Bazán's paper and concludes by saying that, although not in her century but perhaps in the future, Spain will catch up with the civilised world and women will have the

rights which in other countries (presumably the rest of Europe and Colombia) they are no longer denied (II 165).

Acosta de Samper's ideas on the education of women may not be as radical as those of Pardo Bazán who complains, "las leyes que permiten á la mujer estudiar una carrera, y no ejercerla, son leyes inicuas" [the laws which allow a woman to study for a career and not to practice it are unjust] and also remarks that, "La mujer puede escribir una obra de metafísica, y no puede ejercer la veterinaria" [A woman can write a work on metaphysics and not be able to practice veterinary] (II 162). Though conservative, Acosta de Samper did believe that women needed education as a way to better themselves and to achieve a more equal position with men in society. As we have seen, she considers the education of women a priority and she names many erudite women in order to illustrate this belief.

She gives another example of successful women when she visits the monastery of Huelgas del Rey in Burgos.⁸ There, she describes the nuns in the convent who were very powerful not only ecclesiastically, but also in civil and criminal matters (I 83). Nevertheless these women were also from the top of society and they lived luxuriously, each having their own room and garden which is why Acosta de Samper writes, "Fué para aquellos tiempos institución muy benéfica la de un monasterio en donde las damas de alta alcurnia pudiesen encontrar una sombra de soberanía y de la etiqueta cuasi real a que estaban enseñadas, y al mismo tiempo la paz de los claustros y la tranquilidad del corazón", [the monastery was at the time a very beneficent institution, where the ladies of high lineage could find a measure of the sovereignty and etiquette they were used to as well as the peace of the cloisters and

⁸ The topic of convents was among Acosta de Samper's interests. For instance, she published in 1864 in *El Mosaico* a story titled "La Monja" (The Nun), in which she presents conventual life as an acceptable option for women, given the lack of alternatives that society offered them. This was published after a liberal revolution in Colombia (in 1860) in which the government radically legislated against the Catholic Church in the name of "civilisation and progress" (Ordóñez, *Escritura Temprana* 4).

tranquillity in the heart] yet she admits that many of these women could have been put there against their will (I 91). Therefore, Acosta de Samper's education project does not extend to all women in society; it is meant only for women of the upper classes like herself. Her concern with gender issues is thus limited to those social classes.

The Construction of Identity for a fin de siècle Colombian Woman

To conclude, Soledad Acosta de Samper constructs a discursive identity through her text, *Viaje a España en 1892*, an identity which is oftentimes at tension with its discursive elements. The author attempts a travel narrative that is objective and erudite, a way to educate, if you will, her compatriots. She constructs herself as an educated woman capable of reciting the history of Spain at will; here the name of a famous battle, there the name of a conquistador or a bishop or a writer. She professes the idea that to build the future you must know the past and yet to her history lies only in the great institutions, the great events and the great men who forged them, - a view which completely ignores the participation of other social classes in the making of history; this, however, is not incongruous with the discursive formation of history during her time.

The other issue ignored in Acosta de Samper's vision of history and the making of society is race. She acknowledges race only to construct her own identity in opposition, therefore, she touches upon the (barbarous, despotic, sensual) Oriental only to build an opposed Christian. Her brief mention of the indigenous peoples of America follows the same path; the defects of the new American republics are inherited from them whereas the virtues obviously come from the heritage of the more civilised Spaniards. In this way, Acosta de Samper embraces the civilising mission of the Old World and never questions the colonial enterprise.

Her understanding of history as linked with the “architecture of power” which she constantly describes in detail throughout her text and her knowledge, also show her belief in a power that resides mostly in the political and educational institutions and especially in the Catholic Church, which she endows with an immense civilising potential. To her the church is one of the greatest achievements of Spain and perhaps the main reason a visitor should travel to the Peninsula; to see the glories, mostly past, of Christianity. She leaves no doubt as to her religious affiliation in her text.

The author constructs her identity partly through her assumption of Spain’s historical events as the history of her own nation. In this way she relates herself to the civilisation of this country though later on she will separate herself and her nation from it when, departing from the metropolis, the new republic, Colombia, initiates a trajectory of civilisation of its own by following France and England, societies which are more advanced than the backward, relic-like Spain. In this sense, Acosta de Samper’s text is also a “study” of Spain, undertaken by the author during her voyage, in order to further educate her contemporaries on the qualities and vices inherited from its colonial heritage. Though she never fully specifies which are the vices America inherited from Spain, the reader is led to believe that some of the idleness and inertia of which Spain is accused might also be part of its legacy in the new republics. Notwithstanding, the new republics and specially her own, Colombia, are in her view much more civilised than Spain and therefore much closer to the European countries which epitomise “civilisation”. Finally, in the author’s presentation of this “study”, the author reiterates her authoritative voice by showing her capacity for the type of analysis which extends beyond the borders of the discursive formations allowed to a text written by a woman during her time.

The experience of travelling as narrated in the text indicates another aspect of importance in Acosta de Samper's self-construction, her position on the social ladder. Hence throughout the text Acosta de Samper defends the existence and preservation of social hierarchies as a guarantee for the stability of society. It is precisely the position of women on the social ladder which enables them to participate in Acosta de Samper's limited educational project; women are capable of succeeding in society without marriage on the condition of literacy, but this literacy is restricted to the white women of the higher classes. Thanks to this privilege of class and race (and education) Soledad Acosta de Samper was able to travel without male company and to be the most prolific author in Colombian literary history.

CHAPTER IV

Juana Manuela Gorriti: A Herstory of Exile and Displacement

Conoceis algo á la vez tan buscado y tan triste como viajar?
 Anhelamos partir, hallarnos donde no estamos; cual los horizontes del porvenir,
 trasponer tambien los del espacio.
 ¡Es tan prestigiosa la aureola de lo desconocido!
 Realizamos nuestro deseo; alzamos el vuelo en pos de nuevas impresiones, de
 perspectivas nuevas; y...paseamos el alma de decepcion en decepcion; de nostalgia
 en nostalgia; á menos de encontrar un país cuyo miraje guarde la mente; y cuyos
 recuerdos, siquiera sean dolorosos, existan vivos en el corazon.

[Do you know anything which is so sought after and yet so sad as travelling?
 We yearn to depart, to find ourselves where we are not; to cross the horizons of
 the future as well as those of space.
 The aura of the unknown is so prestigious!
 We achieve our desire; we fly to find new impressions, new perspectives; and...we
 move our soul from disappointment to disappointment; from nostalgia to
 nostalgia; unless we find a country whose mirage is held in the mind; whose
 memories, even though painful, will live vividly in the heart.] (Gorriti,
 'Impresiones' 12)¹

“Siempre está por marcharse, siempre quiere volver”²

Juana Manuela Gorriti, the Latin American writer who wrote the above quotation became a traveller, first through exile at an early age, then through several voluntary displacements that became more and more frequent towards the end of her life. The voyage --so sought after yet so sad-- was a constant trope in her writing³ and a constant event in her life. These voyages are the source, the inspiration for her writing. She spoke of finding a country, but she found three countries (Argentina, Bolivia and Peru) whose memories she held in her heart.

¹ Since two texts will be analysed here, “Impresiones” refers to Gorriti’s account “Impresiones y paisajes” from her book *Misceláneas*, while “Tierra” refers to her book *La tierra natal*.

² [She is always about to leave, she always wants to return]; from Mizraje’s article *La escritura velada* (online).

³ Her fiction often deals with voyages and travellers as in *Peregrinaciones de un alma triste* and “Un viaje al país del oro” (“Voyage to the Country of Gold”).

She wrote about these countries, not only in fiction, but also in her travel accounts of which *La tierra natal* (*The Native Land*), one of the texts analysed here, is an example. The title gives the reader an indication as to the destination of this voyage. This was a journey which the author had yearned for and was able to accomplish towards the end of her life. In this text the author travelled from Buenos Aires, Argentina, to the northern province of Salta where she was born. It was a journey by land, first by train, past Tucumán, to the end of the railway line in a town called Metán and from there by coach to the city of Salta.

The author, then 68 years old, had not been in her native land since her youth. In this sense, the journey narrated in *La tierra natal* is also a journey to the author's past and within the geographical limits of Argentina, her country of birth. For this reason, in order to determine the significance of those two other countries, which were crucial in her displacement experience, a second travel account has been used. In Gorriti's book, *Misceláneas*, there is a short text called "Impresiones y paisajes" ("Impressions and landscapes"), which is a narrative of a voyage from Lima, Peru, by sea to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In this long voyage, Gorriti sailed from Callao, the port next to Lima, to the port of Mollendo on the south coast of Peru. From there, she took a train to the city of Arequipa (Peru) and then to the town of Puno (Peru), on the shores of the Lake Titicaca. In Puno, she crossed the lake on a steamboat to the town of Chililaya (Bolivia) and then took a stagecoach to La Paz where she visited family and returned by the same route to Mollendo. She then boarded a ship, which belonged to a British company that crossed the Straits of Magellan, first stopping at the port of Valparaíso (Chile), and then sailing to Montevideo (Uruguay) from where Gorriti then travelled to Buenos Aires. The author narrated her brief encounters with several cities in five different republics --Peru, Bolivia,

Chile, Argentina, Uruguay--, three of which had been her home at different times during her life. She also described the countryside, the details of the voyage, and the people she encountered.

Using these two texts, *La tierra natal* and “Impresiones y paisajes”, as the basis for this chapter, the analysis focuses on the discourses used by the author in the textual configuration of her identity. The topics that shape such identity are closely interconnected: the voyage to the past; the author’s view of society; the ways she defines herself in the text, not only as a traveller but also as a patriot; her use of oral history and indigenous knowledge. Finally, there is a discussion of the topic of farewells, unavoidable in someone whose life was so characterised by displacement.

The Exiles of Juana Manuela

In her book *Misceláneas* Gorriti wrote a two-page review of a text, “Apuntes de Viaje” (“Travel Notes”), written by a contemporary traveller, Santiago Estrada. Estrada, in turn, is the author of the biography of Gorriti found at the beginning of *La tierra natal*, in which Estrada presented her life in these terms:

Nacida en medio de agitaciones, la vida de Juana Manuela Gorriti se ha desenvuelto entre tempestades. Parece que todos sus actos participaran del aspecto agreste, a la par que grandioso, de los Andes de Salta, su cuna; de Bolivia, su refugio en proscripción; del Perú, su oasis en las penurias de larga peregrinación. Las alas de su espíritu, parecidas a las del cóndor, la llevaron del valle a las alturas de la cordillera. Visitada por la inspiración, divide con la Avellaneda el imperio literario de la mujer americana en la América española.

[Born amidst agitation, Juana Manuela Gorriti’s life has developed among storms. It would seem that all her actions participate in wild aspects as well as grandiose ones, from the Andes of Salta, her cradle; from Bolivia her refuge in exile; from Peru her oasis in the pain of the long pilgrimage. The wings of her spirit, similar to those of the condor, took her from the valley to the heights of the mountain range. Visited by inspiration, she shares with Avellaneda the literary empire of the American woman in Spanish America.] (Tierra VI-VII)

Estrada --another Argentinean-- shows great admiration for the “elderly woman”.⁴ She is the pride of his native land, and he declares her participation in “episodios extraordinarios de nuestra historia” [extraordinary episodes of our history] (*Tierra VIII*).

Gorriti, aware of the amazing way in which her life was interwoven with the histories of those countries, chose Estrada’s text to introduce herself in her travelogue *La tierra natal*. She asked for permission from Estrada himself to include these “benévolas frases al frente del libro que consagro a la tierra natal, como una carta de presentación a sus hijos que no me conocen, porque de ellos hame separado medio siglo de destierro” [benevolent phrases at the front of the book consecrated to the native land, as a letter of introduction to its children, who do not know me since half a century of exile has separated me from them] (*Tierra 1*). After half a century of exile the author, who had already become a recognised writer, returned to her native land and devoted a book-length account of this voyage.

Juana Manuela Gorriti was born on the 15 June 1818 in Horcones, in the province of Salta (Argentina). She was the seventh of eight children of Independence General José Ignacio Gorriti and Feliciana Zuviría. When she was six years old, she was taken to a convent in Salta for her schooling but became ill due to the confinement and was returned home. Although her formal education ended there, her enthusiastic reading provided her with the kind of education typical of most well-bred women of this era.

In 1831, when Juana Manuela was thirteen years old, she experienced exile for the first time as the family was forced to flee to Bolivia amidst an army of 2000 when her father and his followers were defeated by his political opponent, Facundo Quiroga. A year later,

⁴ This biography by Santiago Estrada was first published in 1888, --a year before *La tierra natal*-- in the newspaper *El Diario* in Buenos Aires (*Tierra V*); at that moment Gorriti was 70 years old.

and only fourteen years old, she met and married Manuel Isidoro Belzú, an officer in the Bolivian army and had two daughters by him, Edelmira and Mercedes. In 1842 she travelled back to her native Horcones for a short trip and then returned to La Paz. Shortly after, her second exile came about. Belzú, a populist caudillo, was expelled from Bolivia on charges of conspiracy against the government and the family left for Peru.

Once in Peru, Gorriti started her writing career with the publication of her novel *La Quena* in the *Revista de Lima* in 1845, which had been written when the author was only eighteen years old. Many other articles, novels and short stories, followed it. By that time, she had separated from Belzú, who returned to Bolivia alone to restart a political career, which would take him to the presidency of Bolivia, first via a military coup in 1848 and then as constitutional president for the period 1850-1855. Juana Manuela remained in Lima where she established an elementary school and a high school for girls. She also started a literary salon, which attracted many important writers such as Ricardo Palma, Carolina Freyle de Jaimes and many more (Berg online). While in Lima, Gorriti had two other children. Though she never revealed the identity of their father(s), both Clorinda Puch, who died very young, and Julio Sandoval lived with their mother openly (Berg online). During this period her writings were published in Lima (in *El Liberal*, *Iris* and *Revista de Lima*) and also in Argentina (in *Revista del Paraná* and *Revista de Buenos Aires*).

In 1865 Gorriti published in Buenos Aires *Sueños y Realidades* (*Dreams and Realities*), a two-volume edition of short novels and essays. The book was a success and Gorriti was acclaimed as an Argentinean writer despite the fact she had lived out of the country for so long. That same year she travelled to visit her daughter Edelmira who had returned to La Paz in 1855 and had married her fathers' successor to the presidency. On the 28 March 1865, while Gorriti was teaching at another school for young ladies she had established in

La Paz, Belzú was assassinated. Gorriti, who had not spoken to her husband in twenty years, assumed the role of exemplary widow and arranged his burial, which gathered over 8000 people, mainly women, who demanded justice for the death of their leader. Fearing revolts, the new government of Bolivia (responsible for Belzú's death) forced Gorriti to leave La Paz. She fled back to Peru and once in Lima, participated in yet another heroic event when the Spaniards besieged the port of Callao. Gorriti participated bravely in the resistance and aided the injured soldiers. For this reason she was given the *Estrella del 2 de Mayo*, the highest military distinction, by the Peruvian government (Berg online).

Gorriti continued writing and in 1874 she founded the newspaper *La Alborada de Lima*. That same year a series of short novels were published in the magazine *El Album*, founded by the Peruvian writer Carolina Freyre de Jaimes. In 1875 Gorriti travelled by ship via Valparaíso and Montevideo to Buenos Aires, where she received public acclaim as a prominent female writer and was honoured at several ceremonies. Furthermore, the Argentinean government approved a pension for her for being the daughter of General Gorriti but she did not remain long in her country of origin.

Back in Peru, where again she was received enthusiastically, she reopened her school and the literary salon, which became the most distinguished in Lima. It was attended by prestigious artists and writers like Clorinda Matto de Turner, Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera and her dear friend Ricardo Palma. Thirty to forty people attended the salon during eight hours every Wednesday to discuss music, poetry, literature and other topics such as the education of women and their role in society. She also presented many of her original texts and those by her daughter Mercedes, also a recognised poet. In 1876 *Panoramas de la Vida* (*Panoramas of Life*) was published, a book which includes the novel *Peregrinaciones de una alma triste* (*Peregrinations of a Sad Soul*). This was the fictional story of a

Peruvian woman traveller who was, “eager for freedom and pleasure and eager to acquire first-hand knowledge of the people and landscape of the American continent, ‘dando mi vida al espacio y bebiendo todos los vientos’” [giving my life to space and drinking from all the winds] (quoted in Denegri 357). The novel was dedicated to the women of Buenos Aires.

When, in 1877, her Peruvian visa expired, Gorriti travelled again by sea from Peru to Argentina and then by land through the north of the country while preparing her book *Misceláneas* (*Miscellaneous*), which was published at the end of 1878. That same year, she received news of the illness of her daughter and had to return to Peru. Mercedes died in 1879 and Gorriti, who had planned to return to Argentina, was hindered by the war between Peru, Bolivia and Chile⁵ until 1882 when she travelled once again to Buenos Aires.

In 1884, she embarked again for Lima, where she spent most of the year and finally returned to settle in Buenos Aires. From there, the following year, she was able to visit her native province of Salta travelling by land, a trip she had tried to do before but had not accomplished. *La tierra natal*, published in 1889, was the result of this journey. In Argentina Gorriti founded another journal (in Buenos Aires) called *La Alborada Argentina*, where she wrote about the ability, rights and education of women, a topic she explored with the help of many other Argentinean women writers like Josefina Pelliza and Eduarda Mansilla⁶. During the last years of her life, Gorriti published *El Mundo de los Recuerdos* (*The World of Memories*, 1886), *Oasis en la Vida* (*An Oasis in Life*, 1888), and *Cocina Ecléctica* (*Eclectic Cooking*, 1890), a cook book featuring recipes given to her by writers and friends, followed by

⁵ This war is known as the “Guerra del Pacífico” (1879-1883), which started as a limits dispute and ended up with Bolivia loosing its coastline to Chile.

⁶ Mansilla was another acclaimed Argentinean travel writer.

Perfiles (*Profiles* 1892), a collection of short biographies, and in 1893 a series of memoirs entitled *Lo íntimo* (*The Intimate*) was published posthumously (Berg online).

Juana Manuela Gorriti died of pneumonia on the 6 November 1892 in Buenos Aires, at the age of 74. Upon her death, many journals of Lima, La Paz and Buenos Aires published articles about her life and work. Two weeks later, her friend, the acclaimed Peruvian writer Clorinda Matto de Turner, published a biography and a bibliography of Gorriti in *Los Andes* (a periodical of Lima) in which she stated: “Ninguna otra escritora americana y aún europea puede ofrecer al mundo de las letras un legado más rico” [No other American woman writer or even European can offer the literary world a richer legacy] (Berg online). Matto de Turner was right about the wealth of Gorriti’s legacy. It is not only immense in its literary achievement but it also went beyond literary boundaries as she participated in historical events which became part of the construction of the Peruvian, the Bolivian and the Argentinean nations --nations which were a central part of her life.

Journey to Recover the Ephemeral Past

What national identity did Juana Manuela Gorriti claim as her own? This question comes foremost to the surface when dealing with an author who has spent most of her life in transit. She spent her childhood in Salta and her youth in La Paz. In her late twenties she left her husband and migrated to Lima where she spent close to 30 years with brief sojourns in La Paz. Then, from the age of about 58 to 66, she went back and forth, by ship, between Lima and Buenos Aires, a total of seven times. Finally, she spent the last eight years or so of her life “settled” in Buenos Aires.

Therefore the three nations represent different stages in Gorriti’s life and correspond to different parts of her identity: Argentina, on the one hand, is the point of departure and

the place where she lived her later years; in other words, the place where she was a daughter and an old woman. Bolivia was the place where she was a wife and a mother and to which she was forcefully exiled. Peru, by contrast, as a scholar of Gorriti so clearly explains, had a different meaning: “Como no habría de volver Gorriti una y otra vez a Peru -con el cuerpo o con el deseo y las palabras- si es el único sitio que en verdad elige en su vida. Y es el espacio de su rol más activo como escritora y el de su gente más amiga. La mujer más independiente es la que ella desempeña allí” [How could Gorriti not have returned again and again to Peru -with her body, her desire and her words- if it is the only place which she really chooses in her life. And it is the space of her most active role as a writer and of her closest friends. The most independent woman is the one she portrays there] (Mizraje online).

Gorriti's affection for Lima was quite strong. This is evident in the text when she has to leave the city and yearns for the return: “Ah! Pudiera regresar pronto á Lima; fuérame dado en breve pisar su florido suelo, aspirar sus embalsamadas auras...” [Alas! If I could return to Lima soon, if I could soon walk on its florid land, breathe its balsamic aura...] (‘Impresiones’ 9). The reader wonders why she is leaving at all and why she chooses to go back and forth at such a late stage in her life specially since she announces that she would gladly retrace her steps if it meant her return to Lima (‘Impresiones’ 20). A possible hint as to why she decides to begin these voyages is found when, during a train stop, she visits the ruins of an old hostel which used to give her shelter, “Era una pobre casucha de la cual solo quedaba un monton de piedras denegridas; pero yo habia, allí, en otros dias, descansado bajo su pajizo techo; y buscaba en el recuerdo la huella de mis pasos” [It was a poor house of which only a few black stones remained; but I, in other days, had rested under its hay roof, and was searching in my memory the trace of my steps] (‘Impresiones’

19). This declaration shows the potential drive behind this woman's journeys; a desire to retrace her steps, in other words, to retrace her past.

For this reason, she makes the journey to her native Salta --the last journey she will undertake-- which is the fulfilment of her deepest wish to undo her steps, to return to the place where she was born. As she gets closer to Salta, she recognised each of the places she traversed, Trancas, Candelaria, Arenal, Rosario, and they bring memories of her past. "¡Qué delicioso paraíso es Tucumán!" [What delightful paradise Tucumán is!] (*Tierra* 10) she affirms. However, she also comments: "el viaje al través de la tierra amada no comenzó, verdaderamente, para mí, sino después de Metán" [the trip across my beloved land started for me only after Metán] (*Tierra* 12). Finally she arrives in her native Salta, "la heroica, la hermosa, la amada!" [the heroic, the beautiful, the beloved!] (*Tierra* 37).

Throughout both texts, Gorriti often identifies with the places that she traverses on a personal level: "Arequipa es hoy una ruina: sus orientales casas estan desmoronadas; las arcadas de sus galerias mutiladas; sus alegres habitantes tristes y silenciosos. Sombria y taciturna como ellos la contemplaba yo, arrasados los ojos de lágrimas; y la comparaba conmigo. Ella y yo éramos ambas ruina y dolor!" [Arequipa is in ruins today: its oriental houses are crumbled; the arches of its galleries are mutilated; its happy inhabitants are sad and silent. Sombre and taciturn as them, I contemplated the city, my eyes full of tears, and compared it with me. We were both in pain and in ruins!] ('Impresiones' 10-11). Gorriti compares her life with the life of this city; she identifies her body with it. For Gorriti, in addition to the cities, all things in nature --rivers, mountains, the countryside-- are a way of identifying with her past, with her suffering, but also with her happy moments such as those of childhood. The river Pasaje, "río de ilustre y querida memoria" [river of illustrious and beloved memory] (*Tierra* 32), for example, reminds her of those happy moments, "En

sus orillas habíanse deslizado los más rientes días de la vida, los días de la infancia” [on its shores I spent the happiest days of my life, the days of my childhood] (*Tierra* 33).

Oftentimes she cannot find anything to remind her of the past or only a small remnant of it as when she tries to find memories in the city of Rosario:

Asomaba a una ventana del *wagon*, contemplaba el pueblo, que el sol de una mañana primaveral alumbraba, mostrándome las huellas del progreso, donde yo buscaba las del recuerdo.

Había un hotel, carruajes, hermosos edificios de moderna construcción, con todo el *comfort* de nuestra actual existencia; pero ¡ay! Nada de otro tiempo, nada, sino la vieja iglesia (...) descuidada y derruida (...)

[Looking out of the wagon's window, I contemplated the town, which the sun of a spring morning illuminated, showing me traces of progress where I searched for memories.

There was a hotel, carriages, beautiful buildings of modern construction with all the comfort of our present existence, but alas! Nothing from other times, nothing except the old church (...) neglected and broken down (...)] (*Tierra* 171-172)

Then she recollects childhood memories of this old church, where she was baptised. The search for the past then is not always successful. There are often only memories and the present is unrecognisable. For instance, her old house in Salta had been destroyed and “el lugar que ocupaba hallábase vacío como, en la vida, el de sus antiguos moradores” [the place where it stood was empty, as in life, that of its old inhabitants] (*Tierra* 41). She searches for recognisable buildings but instead finds unknown new buildings. At night she cannot sleep and spends it at the window looking out at the street, “familiar para mí, en otro tiempo, hoy desconocida” [familiar to me in other times, today unrecognisable] (*Tierra* 49). She also remembers the families that used to live there and the beautiful women, who looked out of those balconies; she wonders where they have gone and sadly reflects on the death of most of her contemporaries.

Amidst the sadness this causes her, she manages to recognise the houses where her old friends used to live: the house where Costes, where Otero, where Zorrilla, where Puch

used to live (*Tierra* 42). Although these old inhabitants of Salta, the ones she knew in her childhood there, no longer exist, their young, their descendants, come to welcome her, “Y así iba, con gozo y pena a la vez, encontrando en las hijas y los nietos, los rasgos familiares de aquellos que dejé actuando en los caminos de la vida y que ahora ya sólo existían en la memoria” [And so I went, with joy and pain at the same time, finding in the daughters and grandsons the family traits of those I left along the roads of life and which now exist only in my memory] (*Tierra* 46).

The feeling of loss is everywhere; when she refers to her childhood home, her father’s country state at Miraflores, which she has never returned to for fear of the pain of remembering her lost childhood (*Tierra* 166). It is also reinforced when the national anthem is played at an evening event, to which she is invited. This brings tears to her eyes, “Lágrimas de doloroso enternecimiento subieron del corazón, al recuerdo del tiempo en que, niña, de pie y con devota unción, asida a la mano de mi padre, escuchaba ese canto sagrado, en los días clásicos de la patria...” [Tears of painful tenderness swelled in my heart at the memory of the time when, as a child, standing with devoted fervour, holding my father’s hand, I listened to this sacred song, in the days of the classic *patria* (...)] (*Tierra* 48). The national anthem is emblematic of Gorriti’s identification with her *patria*, which is without a doubt her strongest national link and yet she also displays this patriotic feeling for the other two nations that were significant in her life.

The experience of exile looms heavily in Gorriti’s narration; it appears here and there intertwined with memories of the lost past. By way of illustration, she mentions her schoolteachers, Doctor Velazco and his wife, both exiled from Bolivia. She recollects having seen her teacher crying over her children, “como después vi llorar a mi madre sobre nosotros, cuando vinieron, para ella, también, los días del destierro” [as I later saw

my mother crying over us when the days of exile came for her] (*Tierra* 63). Gorriti remembers a relative of hers, an old spinster, trying to console her teacher with these words, “¿qué importa la patria natal, si se vive en esa patria del alma: un corazón que nos ama?” [what does the native land matter if you inhabit that *patria* of the soul: a heart that loves us?] (*Tierra* 65). Gorriti had neither a *patria* --she had three-- nor love since she divorced her husband. There is another reason behind her intention to return to the place where she was born. When she is invited to the countryside while everyone is talking and laughing, Gorriti thinks:

yo, silenciosa, la mente en las lejanías del pasado, volví a ver ese campo que medio siglo antes crucé, parte integrante de una numerosa familia, entre los restos de un ejército, huyendo de la muerte, ante las lanzas sin cuartel de un vencedor inexorable que nada respetaba, ni sexo, ni juventud, ni belleza.

De toda esa multitud proscrita, yo solo, en la cabeza y el corazón la nieve de los años, volvía al punto de partida. Los otros, esparcidos como hojas que arranca el viento, cayeron, y duermen bajo la tierra extranjera...

[I, silent, my mind on the distant past, saw again that field that half a century earlier I crossed, as part of a numerous family, amidst the remains of an army, escaping death, in front of the spears of an inexorable conqueror who did not respect anything, not sex, nor youth, nor beauty.

Of that entire exiled multitude, only I, the snow of age on my head and on my heart returned to the point of departure. The others, dispersed like the leaves blown by the wind have fallen, and sleep under foreign lands...] (*Tierra* 115)

Part of her wish to return is to die in her country of origin even though she has pledged her love for those other countries in which she suffered her exile. Gorriti is torn between these nations, especially between her desire to return to Lima and her desire to see her *patria*. In Buenos Aires she exclaims, “--Señor ya puedo morir; porque he visto la aurora de la felicidad para mi pueblo!--” [Lord, I can now die because I have seen the dawn of happiness for my people!] (*Impresiones* 28). Gorriti is aware that her lifecycle is about to close and for this reason wishes to die in her *patria*, where her people are now at peace at the end of the bipartisan wars which, as we will see, she disdains.

Besides Lima and Salta, she describes other cities in her accounts --cities, which are just as dear to her. Valparaíso is a beautiful city, full of trees and very clean ('Impresiones' 24). In Montevideo, she feels happy to have arrived in a known and loved place ('Impresiones' 28). She describes Arequipa:

Aquí un grupo de casas, alegres, aseadas, sombreadas de sauces; animadas por el canto de los gallos y la risa de los niños; mas allá, verdes sementeras, donde mueren las vacas y trinan las aves; mas allá, en fin, en el fondo del paisaje, entre jardines y verjeles, sentada á la falda del majestuoso Misti, la blanca ciudad de amorosas tradiciones, aparece como un ensueño maravilloso á los encantados ojos de viajero. Arequipa, es, lo he dicho ya en otra parte, una metrópoli oriental, trasplantada de las riberas de la Siria á las floridas orillas del Chili. Falta el turbante; pero al traves de las celosías que encierran sus ojivas ventanas, vénse brillar ojos dignos del paraíso de Mahoma.

Cual la poética Atenas tiene una belleza inalterable hasta en sus ruinas.

[Here a group of houses, happy, clean, shaded by willows, animated by the chant of roosters and the laughter of children, further ahead, green stables where cows moo and birds sing, even further, at the bottom of the landscape, among gardens and orchards, sitting at the base of the majestic Misti, the white city of amorous traditions appears as a marvellous dream before the enchanted eyes of the traveller. Arequipa is, I have said it elsewhere, an oriental metropolis, transplanted from the shores of Syria to the flowered shores of the Chili. The turban is missing, but through the lattices of its ogival windows, eyes worthy of the paradise of Mahomet shine.

Like the poetic Athens it has an inalterable beauty even in its ruins.] ('Impresiones' 16-17)

Arequipa is compared to an oriental city but, unlike Acosta de Samper's descriptions of the Moors, she uses positive terms. Nevertheless, the discursive construction of the orient is still as an allegory of the exotic --of the paradise of Mohammed--, which functions in this passage as a literary strategy.

La Paz with "sus anchas y accidentadas calles pobladas de recuerdos" [its wide and rough streets full of memories] ('Impresiones' 13) is another city loved by Gorriti. According to her, La Paz has the "virile strength" ('Impresiones' 13) needed to survive the many civil wars which have plagued it. She describes the city and its surroundings:

Sus valles son valiosos graneros que provéen á la subsistencia de millares de pueblos; sus *Yungas*, paraíso, donde, á media hora de las nieves eternas, crecen el

naranja y el limonero, que elevan hasta esos páramos el perfume de sus flores. Sus mujeres son tipo de beldad y abnegación: verdaderas compañeras del hombre, así en la adquisición de la fortuna como en los peligros del combate. En la Paz florece hoy una brillante juventud que puede exhibirse con gloria, tanto en una batalla como en la arena científica ó literaria.

[Its valleys are valuable granaries that provide subsistence to a thousand towns, its *Yungas*, a paradise where, half an hour away from perpetual snow, the orange tree and the lemon tree lift the perfume of their flowers to those moors. Its women are examples of beauty and abnegation: true companions of men in the acquisition of fortune as well as in the dangers of battle. In la Paz today brilliant young people flourish, which can be exhibited with glory, in battle and in the scientific and literary arenas] ('Impresiones' 13).

The language Gorriti uses to describe these cities is not tied to any ideas of savageness, dirtiness or primitivism. To her all these cities, even the ones where she has not lived, are beautiful, clean, and strong, as are their inhabitants, "la bella ciudad de la Paz, donde encontré con las afecciones de la familia, las mas esquisitas atenciones de sus amables habitantes" [the beautiful city of la Paz, where I found among the affection of my family, the most exquisite attentions of its amiable inhabitants] ('Impresiones' 11).

Nonetheless, her interpretations of the cities are not without criticism for she is also aware of the disadvantages of these metropolitan centres when compared to life in the provinces. For example, in Salta, Gorriti views the young as morally superior to her because they preserve kindness in their hearts; a kindness she once had but lost along the way precisely in those urban places, "reconociendo con profunda pena que el caudal de bondad que de allí llevé conmigo, habíalo ido dejando, como su vellón el cordero, en las zarzas del camino, a través de esos grandes centros de civilización, de descreimiento y de egoísmo" [recognising with great sorrow that the amount of goodness I had carried with me, I had left, like lambs their fleece, in the brambles of the road, through those great centres of civilisation, of disbelief and of egotism] (*Tierra* 61). Not only has Gorriti lost her youth, her friends and family, her childhood home --her irrecoverable past--, she has also lost certain

values, which she left in those centres that represent civilisation; centres which full of egoism and disbelief also represent corruption.

To summarise, Gorriti's voyage is a means to search for the lost past for which the writer yearns in her old age. Her voyage is also a farewell to those places of her youth, which she will not see again. The experience of displacement throughout the texts --as indeed, throughout the author's late years-- is her way of making sense of an identity which though defined by her age is also in constant fluctuation, as we will see. The way Gorriti identifies and compares her self, sometimes even her own body, with places, cities, and natural things in general, is also a way for her to grasp the past and therefore, "grapple with the discovery of the elusive, contradictory, and plural self" (Denegri 350). As part of this "plural self" which is found in Gorriti's discourses of identity, therefore, her concern with society and the way it functions is worth analysing.

The Importance of Society for Gorriti

Besides the interest in the descriptions of countryside and cities, Juana Manuela Gorriti, unlike Merlin and Acosta, devotes a great part of her texts to descriptions of people from all strata of society. Gorriti depicts not just the elite classes but she also describes the people from lower social classes which surround her. Moreover, in her descriptions, the lower classes are not portrayed in negative terms such as those used by the Countess of Merlin in her treatment of the slaves in Cuba or by Acosta de Samper in her references to the beggars and gypsies of Spain. On the contrary, Gorriti depicts them as clean and hard working, though their jobs may be humble.

At this point it is useful to note that both Romanticism and *costumbrismo* are intertwined in Gorriti's text. These two literary tendencies, which are not mutually exclusive, were strong in Latin America during Gorriti's era. *Costumbrismo* or local colour literature was used by the political and intellectual elite to reaffirm their Creole identity through the description of customs of both commoner and noble. It also described both rural and urban customs with a particular interest in the picturesque in nature (Camacho 629-630). The following description, typical of *costumbrista* sketches, is a vivid account of Gorriti's perceptions of society:

Delante del palenque, bajo la sombra de un grande algarrobo, la sirvienta de la Posta ordeñaba a una vaca negra, la leche de nuestro almuerzo, y cerca de allí, sentada en la raíz saliente del árbol, a la vera de la acequia que salía de un huerto vecino, riendo y parlando con desparpajo llamativo, una mulatita graciosa y pizpireta, lavaba en una ancha batea de madera un montón de ropa blanca.

El conductor de la galera, todo un buen mozo, gaucho hasta las uñas, graciosamente enchiripado, daba en torno a la lavandera vueltas cada vez más concéntricas, fumando su cigarrillo y guiñándole unos ojos sonrientes y picarones.

[Before the palisade, under the shade of a great *algarrobo*, the maid of the post was milking a black cow, the milk for our lunch, and nearby, sitting at the root of the tree, by the side of the ditch of a neighbouring garden, laughing and speaking with showy pertness, a little mulatta, gracious and coquettish, washed a heap of white clothes in a wide wooden tray.

The driver of the wagon-cart, a very handsome lad, gaucho to his nails, graciously adorned, was surrounding the laundry woman with closer circles, smoking his cigarette and winking his smiling and mischievous eyes] (*Tierra* 24-25)

The author continues this passage with an account of the flirting game between these two characters. This passage reveals, Gorriti's concern for the natural setting of her stories and her descriptions evidence her desire to evoke a pleasant almost bucolic scene. Therefore, although partly as literary tool, the *costumbrista* sketches also evoke an American identity which is for Gorriti another way to define herself.

The concern with local customs in Gorriti's text extends to her detailed descriptions of food, and in this way her text also differs from those of the previous authors analysed in this dissertation. Food is mentioned --delicious cold meats, bread and wine from Rioja

offered to her by some fellow passengers (*Tierra* 11)-- as a means for her to assert her connections with her native land.⁷ In Salta, she describes the lunch prepared for her when she arrives, “Manjares exquisitos: carne, huevos y legumbres en las más sabrosas confecciones. El jugo de ese asado que sólo allá se hace; el pollo tostado bajo una capa de pan rallado, aceite, vinagre y perejil” [Exquisite dishes: meat, eggs and vegetables deliciously made. The broth of that barbecue which is only made there, the chicken roasted under a layer of bread crumbs, oil, vinegar and parsley] (*Tierra* 43). She asks her host for a special, probably local, dish called *uchutimpu* which is quickly brought to her, “Las dos Juanitas, dos vivísimas muchachas que nos servían, desaparecieron corriendo y corriendo volvieron, luego, con una fuente caldosa, humeante, exhalando el rico aroma del culantro y yerba buena que festoneaba sus bordes” [The two Juanitas, two vivacious girls who served us disappeared running and running came back, later, with a brothy bowl, smoky, giving off the rich aroma of coriander and mint which adorned its sides] (*Tierra* 44). It is interesting to note that the maids serving Gorriti are described by her as “vivacious” and active, not as idle. Throughout the text, then, whether it refers to food, people or landscape the language is never depreciatory, on the contrary, Gorriti is cautious of showing contempt and instead prefers to show sympathy for her fellow country men and women.

Gorriti's descriptions are sometimes imbued with compassion. Sara Mills interprets this as a “feminine discourse” in which women travel writers try to elide their compassion of humans as a naturally feminine trait (*Discourses of Difference* 96). In Gorriti's case the discourse of compassion is also used as a way of asserting her femininity and a way of showing her spirituality, both of which serve to reaffirm that Gorriti is a kind and spiritual

⁷ Gorriti's cookbook *Cocina ecléctica* is another wonderful example of her interest in food. This text has been analysed by several scholars including Nina Scott with her article “Juana Manuela Gorriti's *Cocina ecléctica*: Recipes as Feminine Discourse.”

“anciana” (old woman). This is particularly noticeable in the cases where she feels compassion for someone who is in a situation in which she has also been. One example appears when she shares a room at a hostel with a woman, “otra viajera” [another traveller], whose two children are ill. Gorriti describes the children, “Los pobrecitos, atacados ambos de tos convulsa” [the poor children, attacked by convulsive cough] and the sad mother takes care of them silently (*Tierra* 35). She later finds out that the woman is troubled by something more than the children’s illness; she is the wife of a bankrupt merchant who has fled and the reason for her voyage is to look for him (*Tierra* 35). Gorriti can extend sympathy to a woman who, like her, has had to flee with two children.

Gorriti comments on situations which to another traveller are below notice. When she sails through the Straits of Magellan, the ship is approached by “una barca tripulada por doce feísimas mujeres patagonas” [a small boat carrying twelve very ugly Patagonian women] (*Impresiones*’ 27). Although these women are her *others*, the Patagonian indigenous people, and despite using negative words such as ugly and dirty, Gorriti sympathises with them and with their precarious situation. She comments, “Aquellas pobres criaturas, desnudas, súcias, con los ásperos cabellos enmarañados, calentaban sus ateridos miembros, en la llama de una fogata que llevaban al fondo de la embarcacion; y tendiendo las manos con ademan suplicante, pedíannos limosna, con gritos desapacibles, semejantes al graznido de las aves acuáticas” [Those poor creatures, naked, dirty, with their rough hair tangled, were warming their cold bodies by a fire they had at the back of the vessel and showing us their hands in a begging manner, they asked us for alms, with unpleasant cries, similar to the shriek of marine birds] (*Impresiones*’ 27). The captain of the ship sends them some food and the voyage continues. These references to indigenous people evoke a sympathetic response from Gorriti who, as we will see, is also respectful of the indigenous knowledge which her contemporaries reject.

Another significant aspect of Gorriti's concern with society lies in her references to friends. Throughout the text, the reader becomes aware of a community of friends, which she constantly mentions and visits whenever possible. These friends are not only important to her; they are what is left of her family. Wherever Gorriti travels, she has someone to visit or she is painfully reminded of someone she knew, who used to live there in the past. Wherever her friends and family are no longer alive, their descendants greet her as a great friend of their families. This is especially evident in her voyage to her native land where she meets the generations that follow hers. She then assumes the voice of the elderly woman describing and praising the beauty of these youths while at the same time regretfully remembering her lost friends and her ephemeral past. The young people, on the other hand, are represented as very affectionate and respectful to Gorriti.

In Metán, for instance, on the way to Salta, she meets her nephew, Germán Torrens, who she lodges with for one night and she also notices that Deidamia, his wife, is the granddaughter of a great friend from childhood, the "beautiful Tránsito" (*Tierra* 168). Deidamia, her sister and her cousin surround the "old woman" affectionately to which she responds by declaring them "angeles demandando el perdón de antiguos agravios y derramando sobre ellos las flores de la divina misericordia" [Angels demanding forgiveness for ancient offences and spilling over them the flowers of their divine mercy] (*Tierra* 14). Further on, another young man, Marcelino Sierra, son of an old friend of Gorriti's family invites her to his house for lunch in his father's name (*Tierra* 27) and she takes the opportunity, once again, to describe his wife and her sister as beautiful women, "Mercedes es una belleza morena de chispeante gracia; pero Jelina tiene la delicadeza exquisita de las rubias. En la familia era llamada -la vicuña- por la dulzura de sus bellos ojos y el dorado color de sus cabellos" [Mercedes is a brown skin beauty of sparkling grace, but Jelina has the exquisite delicateness of the blond ones. In the family she was called -the vicuña-

because of the sweetness of her pretty eyes and the golden colour of her hair] (*Tierra* 29). These sisters go out of their way to give fruit and sweets as gifts to Gorriti. Thus, she describes the young people that surround her, complimenting them abundantly, and depicting them as the hope for the future of the nations; a hope which most contemporary Latin Americans shared at that optimistic moment in history when they believed in the future glory of all the American nations.

Gorriti also finds some of her contemporary friends at some points in the voyage as, for example, her “beloved E”. During one of the stops of her trip, she visits this female friend who used to be rich but her fortune had collapsed. This woman, recognising her immediately, greets her with tears in her eyes (*Tierra* 30). An emotional moment in the text occurs when Gorriti meets her long-time friend Luis Güemes who she has not seen since childhood. Their greeting, through laughter and tears, is revealing: “-¿Cómo es que vives, ñaña mía?” [How is it you’re still alive, my sister?] and she answers equally “-¿Cómo es que vives ñaño mío?” [How is it you’re still alive, my brother?] (*Tierra* 38). The words *ñaña* and *ñaño*, from the Quechua language, mean sister and brother respectively, and although Güemes is not really her brother the reader can surmise from this greeting how important this man is to the author.

Friendship and family are both important themes in Gorriti as we see in these encounters. Gorriti describes her “brother’s” family and household; his sons are “handsome” and his daughters are “pretty” and “angelical” (*Tierra* 54). She marvels at the affection, obedience and respect they show towards their parents, “Qué dulce es, en los postreros días de la vida, cuando el alma se torna tan sombría, sentirse envuelto en esa atmósfera de amor filial, fruición anticipada de la eterna beatitud” [How sweet it is, in the latter days of life, when the soul turns sombre, to feel surrounded by the atmosphere of filial love,

anticipated fruition of eternal happiness] (*Tierra* 55). In his house, she is visited by a multitude of youths who she recognises as the children of her old friends. To her these youths are, once again, a hope for a reconciled future between those opposing factions of the civil wars: “lazo de reconciliación entre aquellos que separó una guerra fraticida...” [a reconciliation tie between those who were separated by a fratricidal war] (*Tierra* 43).

In addition to the friends she has in her homeland, she also finds dear friends in the cities traversed during the voyage narrated in the second text. In Arequipa, for instance, she stays with “Zoila querida!” [dear Zoila!] whom she gratefully calls an “angel” (*Impresiones*’ 17). In Valparaíso, she searches for a friend, a “poetic novelist”, and comments, “Habíala amado en las producciones de su génio, antes, aun, que me fuera dado contemplar aquel bello semblante que hace de ella un ser encantador” [I had loved her in the productions of her genius, even before I was able to contemplate that beautiful face that makes her an enchanting being] (*Impresiones*’ 24). Gorriti adds that the friendship with this woman had changed from a “literary friendship” to a “friendship of the heart”.⁸ These frequent references to friends and family reveal that, for Gorriti, this vast community of friends which she has kept despite distances, nations, age differences and even class differences, is an important part of her life since it provides for her a sense of belonging to all of these different places. For this reason, Gorriti usually and carefully describes the society of these different places in positive ways.

For example, the society of Gorriti’s province has no reason to envy the society of the great centres of civilization. She does not represent the inhabitants of the province as primitive or backward, on the contrary she sees great virtue and innocence especially

⁸ Nora Domínguez, in her article “Historia literaria de una intimidad argentina. De viajes, fragmentos y familias”, claims that in Gorriti’s texts there are feminine societies for writing in which the enunciation is not disputed but is peacefully ceded (21-22).

among the young, who, as already mentioned, represent truth, beauty and hope for her *patria*. Upon her arrival in Salta the representatives of the Catholic Youth invite her to a literary night, a celebration of the centenary of Saint Rose of Lima (a native Latin American saint); “Cuando aquella noche entré al teatro (...) pareciome hallarme en el Colón de Buenos Aires o en el Principal de Lima: tanto, las beldades que ocupaban sus palcós me recordaban a las bellas porteñas y a las encantadoras hijas del Rimac; a estas, sobre todo, por el fulgor andaluz de sus ojos y la gracia modesta y exquisita con que llevaban sus galas”. [When that night I entered the theatre (...) I thought I was in the *Colón* of Buenos Aires or in the *Principal* of Lima: the beauties that occupy its boxes reminded me of both, the beautiful porteñas and of the enchanting daughters of the Rimac, especially of those because of the Andalusian shine of their eyes and the modest and exquisite grace with which they wore their evening dress] (*Tierra* 46-47).

These youths are as elegant as those of Buenos Aires or Lima. At the end of her stay in Salta the young put on a ball in her honour. “A ball for an old woman!” she exclaims mockingly and yet she enjoys it for there she can see the beauty and elegance of the young which, upon comparison with her generation, she finds unchanged (*Tierra* 117-118). Even in a small city such as Puno, she praises the talents of a singer, an “intelligent artist”, whose work is inspired by the “splendid landscape of the Titicaca” (*Impresiones* 11).

The society described by Gorriti, nevertheless, has many strict rules that must be followed and this is specially the case for women. Gorriti, for example, is aware of the condition of the female writer of her time. Referring to the advice she has given another contemporary female author, Mercedes Cabello, she says; “No me canso de predicarle que el mal no debe pintarse con lodo sino con nieblas. El lodo hiede, y ofende tanto al que lo maneja como a quien lo percibe. Además se crea enemigos, si incómodos para un hombre, mortales para

una mujer. El honor de una escritora es doble: el honor de su conducta y el honor de su pluma” [I keep telling her that evil should not be painted with mud, but instead with mist. Mud is hideous and offends both the one who writes it as much as the one who perceives it. Besides, enemies are made, which if uncomfortable for a man, are lethal for a woman. A woman writer’s reputation is double: the reputation of her behaviour and the reputation of her quill] (quoted in Domínguez 24).

Gorriti is astutely aware that the female writer is in a much more vulnerable position when writing, than is the male writer and she must, therefore, be more careful with the subject of her writing. In other words Gorriti was conscious of some constraints which society imposed on the female author; these are constraints of production, which, according to Mills, differentiate women’s writing from that of men (*Discourses of Difference* 69). Nevertheless, Gorriti represents writers in general as constantly exposed to criticism as in the following observation, “Necesaria es la fruición inefable del escritor al dar a luz un libro para que pueda sobreponerse al terror de entregar ese hijo de su corazón y de su pensamiento, al diente chacálico” [The inexpressible satisfaction of the writer is necessary when giving birth to a book in order to overcome the terror of surrendering this child of the heart and thought to the teeth of the jackals] (*Tierra* 5). Therefore, the wise “old woman” exemplified by Gorriti in her texts is careful of depicting appropriate material in her writing. She, who compares the writing of a text to the female function of giving birth to a child, knows well the power of the critic; power which can be fatal to a female writer and to her child –the book.

One example of her caution occurs when a fellow passenger insists on narrating gruesome stories of the bipartisan wars, which occurred at different points in the landscape they are traversing. Gorriti begs him to stop, “¡Calle usted por Dios, señor! –Dije a aquel bárbaro,

que no llevaba miras de acabar su leyenda de horrores” [Please be quiet, sir! – I told this barbarian, who did not care about finishing his horror stories] (*Tierra* 20). But although the man continues with his bloody tales, Gorriti has proven to her public that she disapproves of this behaviour and proves it further by limiting the transcription of such horror stories. This does not mean that she never mentions the wars; quite the opposite, she mentions them often since they provide an opportunity to describe the patriotic glories of her ancestors, however, her caution extends even to these anecdotes since she has to conform to the limited matter which women of her time were allowed to depict.

Gorriti intertwines her stories with ideas on how society should operate and on the ideals and principles which should govern the behaviour of its citizens. She illustrates these ideals throughout her texts as a means of offering advice to those writers -- especially the female writers-- who are younger and inexperienced. As Domínguez so cleverly states, “La vejez parece autorizar otro tipo de reglas y controles, resulta un territorio ganado desde donde es posible valorar a las otras e indicarles las estrategias a seguir” [Old age seems to authorise a different set of rules and controls, it seems a conquered territory from which it is possible to value the others and to show them the strategies to be followed] (24). For this reason, her descriptions of women are often followed by these prescribed ideals.

Both men and women must be patriotic; this is the ideal which is highest on the list. However, they must also have certain qualities including the romantic ideal of beauty, as well as intelligence, courage, fidelity, generosity, humbleness, kindness, and in women’s case, self-sacrifice. She sometimes describes her fellow passengers as cultivated people (*Impresiones*’ 18); they are capable of entertaining her with interesting stories about the places they traverse. The difference in Gorriti’s discourse lies in the fact that, for her, these cultivated people are not synonymous with a high social status. In fact, there are occasions

where she refers to people from the so-called high class that are not cultured but instead barbarous and vulgar.

The exemplary model for a woman to follow is revealed in her description of her grandmother who had “todos los dones que pueden hacer del ser humano un ideal: belleza, inteligencia, valor, lealtad, generosidad, abnegación” [all the qualities which can make a human ideal: beauty, intelligence, courage, loyalty, generosity, self-sacrifice] (*Tierra* 138).⁹ Although her grandmother, Feliciano, was the ideal woman, she quickly remarried when her husband, Gorriti’s grandfather, died. Her comments on this matter show her disapproval: “-Sin embargo, la que parecía inconsolable, se consoló, pues contrajo otras nupcias; y, lo que fue peor, con un hombre, aunque de alto linaje, horriblemente feo, tuerto, y, lo peor de lo peor... ¡vulgar!” [Nevertheless, the inconsolable one found consolation, since she remarried and worse, with a man, although of high lineage, horribly ugly, one eyed, and the worst of the worst ... vulgar!] (*Tierra* 151) and she announces that she has never forgiven her grandmother for this. Gorriti is aware of the fact that even people from the best lineage can be vulgar.

On the topic of human ideals, a significant issue is her perception of high society, which is often dealt with in a mocking manner. The story of the gaucho Cheba Calatayo, who taught a man from a higher social class than his “a ser gente” [to be a decent person] (*Tierra* 159), illustrates this perfectly. A man called Calixto drives away a stranger who is taking refuge from the rain in the vestibule of his home. Later, during a trip to Buenos Aires with his daughter, Calixto has to find refuge from a storm in the middle of the road

⁹ The grandmother that Gorriti refers to is her mother’s mother, also named Feliciano, who married Agustín Zuviría. She was Agustín’s second wife and married him at an appropriate age. Agustín had married his first wife when he was 18 and she was 30 and for this reason his first wife had not been introduced to his parents. After the thirty-year old’s death, when Agustín remarried, he introduced his young new wife to his parents (*Tierra* 139).

and ends up in Cheba's house, who unbeknownst to him is the man he had driven away from his home. Cheba treats Calixto and his daughter with humble hospitality, giving them food and shelter. When upon departure Calixto tries to pay for what he has eaten the gaucho is offended and says that he does not sell his affection. Calixto tells him to order something from Buenos Aires, which he will bring on the way up. Cheba only asks him not to drive away any fellow who is taking refuge from the weather in his home, the next time this happens, from which Calixto infers Cheba's identity (*Tierra* 159-165).

Another example of this is the story of Jacinta Soldorado, an ambitious woman --and a royalist-- who had made an effort to marry a Colonel from Spain. In order to marry Jacinta, Colonel Santalla first has to show his titles of nobility (*Tierra* 106). Gorriti, in a mocking yet moralising manner, narrates the story of how Santalla who was just a farmer in Spain, had obtained his titles of nobility because he had beaten Ferdinand, prince of Asturias, at a game (*Tierra* 106-109).

Moreover, the story continues with the observation that no matter the titles, this "rustic" man, "Era celoso, brutal, y ultrajaba la virtud de su esposa con indignas sospechas, más de una vez expresadas con los puños del labriego" [was jealous, brutal and insulted his virtuous wife with base suspicion, more than once expressed with the fists of the peasant] (*Tierra* 111). Jacinta, who suffers in silence for fear of a scandal, nonetheless, proves to her husband her faithfulness. When a friend of Santalla who he has sent to protect her while he is away, tries to attack her, Jacinta using a pistol she has hidden in her clothes, kills him in self defence (*Tierra* 112-113). In this example then, Gorriti invalidates the class standards that are so often just appearance, but reaffirms the traditional ideal of the purity of a woman's reputation. In fact, in this Catholic society, this ideal is so crucial that it even

allows the author to contravene rules about the appropriate narrative material for a woman.

A further illustration of this contempt for the social classes occurs when Gorriti describes the Bolivian president's wife. She is beautiful, simple, kind and humble and Gorriti hopes, "Ojalá tuvieran el talento de imitarla aquellas necias que, encastilladas en *su alta posición social*, créenla un obstáculo que les impide visitar la morada del menesteroso y acudir en auxilio del desvalido....." [If only she were imitated by those senseless women who fortified by *their high social position*, believe it an obstacle that impedes them from visiting the home of the needy and help the helpless.....] ('Impresiones' 14, emphasis in the original). The author emphasises the words "their high social position", as a sign of disdain for these class distinctions.

In another example, a passenger describes for Gorriti the way society operates at the thermal springs from which he has just come. The tourism industry has built hotels where families used to set up tents and now, instead of socialising, they just lock themselves in the hotel rooms:

Y es que, con el progreso ha venido el lujo, servido por la vanidad, que por todas partes ha extendido su imperio.

Allí, en ese lugar apartado, entre bosques y peñascos, se les halla, como en Buenos Aires, encarnado en las mujeres, extraviando su buen sentido con despóticas exigencias, locas pretensiones y necias rivalidades.

Los vestidos más o menos costosos, los abanicos, las joyas, las flores y los *aigretts* de los sombreros, abren abismos que, aún en ese paraje apartado, separan, una de otras, a las señoras, haciendo el aislamiento donde había de encontrarse una bella sociedad.

[And with progress, luxury came along, served by vanity, which has extended its empire everywhere.

There, in that far away place between forests and rocks, it is found, as in Buenos Aires, embodied in the women, loosing their common sense with despotic demands, crazy pretensions and silly rivalries.

The dresses, more or less expensive, the fans, the jewels, the flowers and the *aigretts* of the hats create abysses that, even in that distant place, separate ladies from each

other, creating isolation where there should have been a beautiful society] (*Tierra* 180-181)

Gorriti, comparing this with recollections of her youth at those same springs, feels disillusioned. She remembers all the communal activities: hikes, evening gatherings, music and theatre events. This is another criticism, of the classist separation of society, which is articulated by Gorriti through the voice of this man.

There is yet another poignant example of this when she embarks on the ship that is to take her through the Straits of Magellan. She describes the passengers from first class and then the second and third classes of the ship, which are composed of “victims of the cataclysm and the monetary crisis” (*Impresiones* 26). She is particularly sympathetic to the women in that situation and she adds, “la severa etiqueta inglesa observada con rigidez en esta línea del Estrecho, vedábales el paseo bajo el toldo de popa; reservado exclusivamente para los huéspedes de la primera cámara” [the severe English etiquette rigidly observed in this waterline of the Strait, prohibited their walks under the canopy of the stern, which was exclusively reserved for first class passengers] (*Impresiones* 26). She is tormented by the fact that she can do nothing to help these women other than to bring them delicacies from her table which she hides in her pockets. When the ship stops at a port, “Apresurámonos á bajar á tierra para estrechar la mano á esas amables compañeras de viaje, que la tiesura británica tenía alejadas de nosotros” [We hurried to land to stretch the hands of those kind travel companions that British stiffness had kept apart from us] (*Impresiones* 26). With these anecdotes Gorriti declares her dislike of the socio-economic categories that keep kind people apart. She uses as discursive strategy -the tactic of writing without seeming to criticise, in order to mock those constructions. In this sense her identity is constructed not in strict adherence to a hierarchical social order but rather from a set of ideals such as

patriotism, compassion, etc. which are important to her in the construction of a fair society.

The Patriotic Voyager or Gorriti's Self-Definition

Juana Manuela Gorriti, more than the other two writers analysed in this dissertation, interweaves her perceptions of herself --and in this sense is more autobiographical-- within her text. She declares at the beginning of "Impresiones y paisajes", "Yo soy supersticiosa" [I am superstitious] ('Impresiones' 9) and she proves this in her other text, where she tells the story of a grandfather who was visited in a dream by his father warning him of his death (*Tierra* 146). The fact that Gorriti has no pretensions to erudition and that she incorporates other sources of knowledge, sources that during her era had become synonymous with ignorance, primitivism and backwardness, shows her identification with these oral histories. Thus by embracing these other sources of knowledge, which lie outside nineteenth-century positivism, Gorriti readily assumes her position as a marginalised member of society whose access to knowledge is hindered by gender barriers. Instead she chooses to situate herself in the sphere of emotions and intuition, a discourse more appropriate to her gender.

Gorriti's appreciation of indigenous knowledge and oral history surprises the reader. This is evident in her narration of the legend of the *ninachiri*. In Salta, one night, she sees a falling star and is reminded of, "aquel misterioso *Farol*, el *Ninachiri* de los antiguos habitantes calchaquíes, esa ave flamígera que, de tiempo inmemorial aparecía en las noches de conjunción" [that mysterious *Light*, the *Ninachiri* of the ancient Calchaqui, that resplendent bird that, from immemorial time appeared in the nights of conjunction] (*Tierra* 52). No one had ever known where this "bird" came from or where it hid but it had

stopped appearing since 1830. Finally, it is seen again in 1884 and when Gorriti is told of this sighting, she exclaims, “Es el Farol, el centenario Ninachiri, que durante medio siglo ha incubado su nueva vida y renace de sus cenizas” [It is the Light, the centenarian Ninachiri that has incubated new life during half a century and is reborn from its ashes] (*Tierra* 52). The man who has told her of this apparition --whom she refers to as a know-all-- is scandalised by her comment and in turn remarks “Nada hay tan atrevido como la ignorancia” [Nothing is as impudent as ignorance]. This legend, from the vast repertory of indigenous oral history, is to the “know-it-all” sheer ignorance, and to Gorriti just as valid as any other form of knowledge.

Indigenous medicine appears in the story of Martita, whose lover “habiendo quedado moribundo en el campo de batalla, un indio compasivo, lo arrancó de entre las garras de los buitres, que habían ya caído sobre él, y lo llevó a su choza, donde curó sus heridas y le dio vida y salud con una yerba maravillosa, secreto de los indígenas” [having been left to die in the battlefield, a compassionate Indian pulled him out of the claws of vultures which had already fallen on him, and took him to his hut, where he cured his wounds and gave him life and health with a marvellous herb, an Indian secret] (*Tierra* 75). In fact, Martita’s entire story is narrated by a most wonderful source of oral history; an old woman seamstress at Gorriti’s house when she was a child.

Gorriti’s anecdote reverts to her childhood as she confesses to her curiosity; she tried to overhear Martita telling her story of love and disappointment, but is discovered and cannot hear the whole story (*Tierra* 66-67). She then turns to a source of oral history, which is readily available to her through the figure of the seamstress, nicknamed Larguncha:

Era esta una joven costurera que venía dos veces por semana a repasar la ropa de la casa y a quien los niños hacíamos quedar días enteros ocupada en contarnos cuentos.

Estos relatos eran pagados a peseta por oyente, y no nos quejábamos, porque nada tan sabroso y fantástico, desde el exordio hasta el epílogo, como los cuentos de la Larguncha.

Era, además, la crónica de Salta: todo lo sabía; desde que pusieron la primera piedra de sus cimientos, hasta la hora presente: origen de las familias, su historia, con los sucesos más ocultos habidos en el seno de estas: todo.

Este largo y profundo estudio social, debíalo Larguncha, no sólo a las propias observaciones, cosechadas en medio del ejercicio de su humilde labor, sino a las de su madre y su abuela como ella, y desde su juventud, costureras a domicilio.

Sentada en medio al círculo infantil que, con la boca abierta la escuchaba; sobre las rodillas la costura, y los dedos y la aguja en vertiginoso movimiento, Larguncha nos refería las maravillosas leyendas de Blanca Flor; de la Sirena del Bermejo, de la subterránea Salamanca.

[This was a young seamstress that came to the house twice a week to repair the clothes and whom we children kept busy all day telling us stories.

These narrations were paid a *peseta* per listener and we did not complain because there was nothing as delicious and as fantastic from the beginning to the end, as the stories of the Larguncha.

She was, in addition, the chronicler of Salta: she knew everything; from the moment the first stone was put in its foundation, to the present hour: origin of the families, their history, with the most hidden events occurring in the heart of these: everything.

Larguncha owed this long and profound social study not only to her own observations, harvested in the middle of the exercise of her humble work, but also to those of her mother and her grandmother, like her, and from her youth, hired seamstresses.

Sitting in the middle of the circle of children who, with open mouths listened to her, on her knees the sewing, and in her fingers the needle in vertiginous movement, Larguncha told us the marvellous legends of White Flower; of the Mermaid of Bermejo; and of the subterranean Salamanca] (*Tierra* 67-68)

Larguncha recounted everything from the fantastic to the real, from the comic to the sombre (*Tierra* 68-69). After Martita's love story --betrayed by her fiancé who marries her best friend instead-- Gorriti concludes, "Larguncha daba siempre fin a sus relatos con una mirada a sí misma: -Gracias al cielo -dijo entonces- el trabajo incesante y fatigoso, la preservaba a ella de esas borrascas en que naufraga el alma" [Larguncha always finished her narrations with an introspective look: -Thank the heavens- she then said- the never ending and tiring work preserved her from those storms in which the soul sinks] (*Tierra* 83). Gorriti validates oral history and local culture as a source of knowledge, one that, as

already mentioned, was relegated to the realm of the primitive in the era's scientific discourse. In this way, she also authenticates the narrative voice in her travel writing, which like Larguncha's "humble work" is also an attempt at a "profound social study".

Part of Gorriti's self-definition is her situation as a traveller. In *La tierra natal*, when she begins her voyage, she announces "Nunca proscrito, al tornar de largo destierro, sintió el gozo que llevaba en el corazón la viajera que, un día diez y siete de agosto, se embarcaba, camino de Salta, en el ferrocarril al Rosario" [Never an exile, retuning from a long banishment, felt the joy that this traveller had in her heart on that day, the seventeenth August, when she embarked for Salta, on the train to Rosario] (*Tierra* 4). Her identity as a female traveller is also constructed within the text and it varies according to situation, as Denegri states in her study of Gorriti's *Peregrinaciones de un alma triste*; "Both Tristan and Gorriti shift positions strategically as circumstances demand, each new position resulting in the production of a different identity" (351).

These shifts are clear in her texts; sometimes she poses as elderly woman who is in need of the gallantry of the male passengers who surround her, "Única de mi sexo, y también a causa de mi edad, rodeábanme atenciones y cuidados" [The only one of my sex and also because of my age, I was surrounded by courtesy and care] (*Tierra* 15). In other occasions she is the helpless traveller who relies on the kindness of people, "Pero ahí se hallaba, velando en favor de la peregrina cansada y enferma, la fina galanteria de un hombre generoso" [But there it was, attentive to the needs of the tired and sick pilgrim, the fine gallantry of a generous man] (*Impresiones* 16). Her wisdom in the matter of travelling is summarised in the following, "El viajero, cualquiera que sea la condicion en que camine es un mendigo menesteroso, y su situacion, un termómetro en que se conoce el grado de caridad en el corazon humano..." [The traveller, whatever the condition in which he walks,

is a needy beggar, and his situation is a thermometer in which he can measure the degree of charity in the human heart...] ('Impresiones' 16). Travelling is a way for her to know what is in the heart of her fellow countrymen. She can further examine them by shifting identities according to what best benefits her at a certain moment and within a certain context.

In other situations, in places where courage is required of her, she talks about her strong will ('Impresiones' 18) and refers to her identity as a traveller who is strong and knowledgeable in her travels. While some passengers complain of the difficulties of travel, for instance, she exclaims, "Habituada a los penosos viajes a lomo de caballo por los ásperos senderos que serpean sobre los abismos en los elevados picos de los Andes, todo camino y todo vehículo parecíanme deliciosos" [Accustomed to the difficult voyages on horse back through the rough roads that turn on abysses of the high peaks of the Andes, every road and vehicle seemed delightful to me] (*Tierra* 16). In this quote, she is no longer the helpless old woman but a traveller accustomed to the rough roads of the Andes showing disdain for the grumbling passengers whom she ignores.

Instead of listening to their complaints, she chooses to concentrate on the "splendid landscape" to which she exclaims, "-¡Hete ahí -exclamaba- purísimo cielo de otro tiempo! Pintorescos sebiliares; rientes serranías de Metán, coronadas de vuestro majestuoso Crestón; ¡bendito sea Dios, que me permite volver a veros!" [There you are – I exclaimed- pure sky of another time! Picturesque *sebiliares*; laughing ranges of Metán, crowned by your majestic Crestón; blessed be God that permits me to see you again!] (*Tierra* 16). Gorriti once again shifts her discourse of identity from intrepid traveller to that of a woman in spiritual admiration of the beauty of the landscape. This exclamation reminds the reader of the one used by the Countess of Merlin upon her arrival in Cuba. As noted in my analysis

of Merlin's writing, the depictions of landscape and the spirituality of the language are a way for the author to align herself with available feminine discourses. And, as with Merlin, Gorriti's romantic language of religious and spiritual awe as seen in the above quotation is an effective resource for the construction of a feminine, artistic, spiritual and patriotic identity in these writers.

Thus, nature plays an important role in Gorriti's texts, even in places where it is threatening to others. An example of this is her remark on the discomfort displayed by other passengers when the coach climbs mountains and shakes them. Gorriti, not at all uncomfortable, feels instead that nature is a friend that greets her:

Mis compañeros rabiaban; pero a mí, contentísima, parecíanme aquellos barquinazos los arrullos de una nodriza; y al polvo lo sentía perfumado como el humo del incienso. ¡Qué! Si hasta los arañazos que al paso nos daban los *churquis*, y que a los otros arrancaban maldiciones, a mí me hacían sonreír como una bendita, porque me parecían caricias de los bosques, de aquellos bosques amigos que se recordaban a mi amor.

[My travel companions groaned; but to me, happily, those movements seemed like the rocking of a nanny; and the dust felt as though scented by the smoke of incense. What! If even the scratches that the *churquis* gave us as we passed by and made the others curse, made me smile like a blessed one, because they seemed the caresses of the forest, of those friendly forests that remembered my love] (*Tierra* 33-34).

As mentioned earlier, this personal identification with the land, the rivers, the forests, the mountains --that is with nature-- is used by Gorriti as a way to claim her lost past and her lost land, but it is also used by her in her assertion of identity as an old woman devoted to her spirituality.

For the author, landscape and spirituality are closely related. An example is found when the author speaks of a hill in Salta, which she refers to as a loving friend. To her dismay, however, the mountain has been ecologically devastated and she calls this a "sacrilegious devastation", which should have been avoided by the authorities of the city (*Tierra* 98-99).

The landscape is sacred and capable of producing spiritual bliss, “A cada curva del camino os sentis bañado por las ráfagas de una atmósfera cada vez mas tibia, cada vez mas perfumada. El aroma de la salvia, del heliotropo, y la retama se eleva en ondas embriagantes que adormecen los sentidos y producen al espíritu un dulce desvarío” [at every curve of the road you feel bathed by the gusts of an increasingly warmer and perfumed atmosphere. The aroma of sage, of heliotrope, of *retama* rises in intoxicating waves that sooth the senses and produce a sweet spiritual delirium] (‘Impresiones’ 18).

In her descriptions of nature, she includes details, like the names of the plants, which evidence her knowledge of common species found in the areas she traverses and which further proves her identification with these. This also creates an image of her as observant, knowledgeable, and local.

The beauty of the landscape, unless ecologically devastated, is always emphasised. It always helps her to forget those parts of the voyage which are uncomfortable. The methods of transportation are also important to Gorriti who describes them in detail. On the train from Mollendo to Arequipa in Peru she declares:

El ferro-carril del puerto á esta ciudad, obra maestra de ciencia y audacia, se estiende sobre alturas vertiginosas; pero cubiertas, en esta estacion del año, de una florida vegetacion. Nada tan bello como esos jardines aéreos, suspendidos sobre inmensos precipicios; nada tan espléndido como los horizontes que desde estas etéreas cimas se divisan. Allí el alma se siente estremecida á la vez que de placer, de horror y de entusiasmo!

[The railway to the port of this city, masterpiece of science and audacity extends over vertiginous heights; but covered, at this time of the year, with a florid vegetation. There is nothing as beautiful as these aerial gardens, suspended over precipices: nothing as splendid as the horizons which can be seen from these ethereal summits. There the soul trembles from pleasure, from horror and from enthusiasm] (‘Impresiones’ 10)

When she gets on the train to Puno, she praises progress and “Meiggs que lo introdujo en esos desiertos” [Meiggs, who introduced it in those deserts] (*Impresiones*’ 11).¹⁰ She compares navigation on Lake Titicaca with “un sueño de hadas” [a dream of fairies] (*Impresiones* 11). In addition to the pleasant parts of the voyage, Gorriti also mentions the boredom and monotony of travelling by ship through the Straits of Magellan (*Impresiones*’ 27). This presents for the reader an interesting depiction of all aspects of the voyage for this nineteenth-century Latin American woman.

Of the many identities which Gorriti assumes in her travelogue, it is interesting to note her patriotic self. There are references to the conflict between *unitarios* and *federales* (*Tierra* 15).¹¹ Her representations of exile correspond to these bipartisan wars since it was because of them that she had to flee the country. It is evident from her descriptions, although never stated directly, that Gorriti feels disdain for this “partidismo político” [political partisanship] (*Tierra* 15). A significant episode of her country’s history is narrated in the text in terms of the wars between “fratricidal political parties”, which she calls “*Patria nueva y Patria vieja*” [New fatherland and Old fatherland] (*Tierra* 56). She explains both terms in these words, “*Patria nueva*: agrupación de ilusos y de mal intencionados que, al frente el enemigo, siempre pronto a invadir el suelo patrio, pedían instituciones cuando no era todavía posible dar sino combates. *Patria vieja*: falange de héroes, que, sin tregua ni descanso, guerreaban, hacía diez años, contra las poderosas huestes españolas” [New fatherland: group of deluded and badly intentioned men, that, with the enemy in front, always ready to invade the fatherland, asked for institutions when it was only possible to

¹⁰ Henry Meiggs was a North American entrepreneur contracted by the Peruvian government in the early 1870s to build part of the railway system (Halperin 288).

¹¹ The conflict between *unitarios*, those in favour of a central government, and *federales*, those in favour of federalism, generated a civil war in Argentina, right after the wars for independence (Halperin 215). This was a common feature of the nineteenth century in Latin America as the colonial order disappeared and the Creoles tried to establish autonomous nations.

wage war. Old fatherland: phalanx of heroes that without truce or rest, fought for ten years against the powerful Spanish army] (*Tierra* 56). Her family belongs to the *patria vieja*, the ones who fought for independence, and hence she devotes a section to the story of the hatred between *patria vieja* and *nueva*, the latter being responsible for her exile. The author is proud of her family's participation in the wars for independence. Gorriti's patriotism is strongest when she talks about the Independence warriors in her family, an all-male gallery of heroes.

It is interesting to note that Gorriti dedicates a large part of her narration to her grandfather and then another part to her fathers' political strength. Mizraje notes that Gorriti hardly ever talks about her mother, her sisters, or her aunts --that is, the female members of her family-- in her reconstruction of her family's genealogy in *Lo Intimo* (Mizraje online). In *La tierra natal* Gorriti barely mentions her mother and yet her father is described in the following way:

Pero había un hombre al que Salta acudía en esas situaciones extremas, un hombre de alto consejo, de prontas resoluciones y enérgica ejecución y cuya influencia tutelar nunca invocaba en vano.

Este hombre era el general José Ignacio Gorriti, su Diputado en el primer Congreso sudamericano, el vencedor de Río Chico; de quien Pache Gorriti era hermano.

Concluida la guerra sagrada, retirado en el campo, era la paz del hogar y las dulzuras de la familia, ocupábase en restaurar su fortuna, que disminuyó grandemente, prodigando auxilios continuos en dinero y hacienda, a los ejércitos de la Patria.

[But there was a man to which Salta went to in those extreme situations, a man of good advice, prompt resolution and energetic execution and whose tutelary influence was never invoked in vain.

This man was General José Ignacio Gorriti, Deputy in the first South American Congress, conqueror in Río Chico, and whose brother was Pache Gorriti.

Once the sacred war was over, retired in the country side, he was source of peace in his home and sweetness in his family, was occupied in restoring his fortune which was greatly diminished, because he gave continuous aid in money and land to the armies of the *patria*] (*Tierra* 87-88)

General Gorriti, her father has “una voz que poseía el don de suprema autoridad y de convicción profunda” [a voice which possessed the quality of supreme authority and profound conviction] (*Tierra* 92) capable of mending any situation.

In the only story of such length (30 pages long), Gorriti recounts the life of her maternal grandfather, Agustín Zuviría, a Spaniard who migrated to Argentina, “país que él debía amar con el amor de una segunda patria” [a country he must have loved with the love of a second *patria*] (*Tierra* 132), in the second half of the eighteenth century. He lived in Buenos Aires when the revolt of cacique Tupac Amaru exploded in Cuzco, “esparciendo la alarma desde Lima a Buenos Aires” [spreading alarm from Lima to Buenos Aires] (*Tierra* 133). The Tupac Amaru uprising of 1780, in which the Peruvian popular classes pretended to crown a descendent of the last Inca to rule in America, made both Spaniards and Creoles apprehensive about the possibilities of awakening ancient ambitions among the indigenous population (*Pagden* 66-67). Hence, her grandfather went with a legion of Spaniards to aid the neighbouring viceroyship against the indigenous masses. Despite this, Agustín is still a source of pride for Gorriti, or perhaps her writing is also an attempt to redeem him by stressing the qualities for which he was so loved since “Desde el poderoso hasta el mendigo, todos lo amaban” [From the powerful to the beggar, they all loved him] (*Tierra* 159): he gave much money to charity, he visited prisoners, he took care of their needs and sent them food daily (*Tierra* 143), and so upon his death all of Salta was in mourning (*Tierra* 159).

The Sorrow of Farewells

“La vida es una continua y dolorosa despedida” [life is a continuous and painful farewell] (*Impresiones* 14) writes Gorriti in one of her texts. Her voyage to Salta is narrated from

the beginning to the end including the sad farewell, one which is marked by the knowledge that it will be the last time she sees her native land. The farewell between Gorriti and her old friend Luis Güemes is the highest emotional point in the text:

Queriendo prorrogar lo más posible la despedida, Luis y toda la familia venían conmigo hasta detrás del Portezuelo, donde la mensajería aguarda a los viajeros retardados.

Yo, sin poder contener mis lágrimas, lloraba en un rincón del carruaje.

Luis para evaporar las suyas, reía y ensartaba toda suerte de chistes.

-¡Vamos! -Exclama- ¿Habríase visto tanto lloviznar? ¡Mujeres! ¿Si todavía no es tiempo de agua! Ñaña, da tú el ejemplo; seca esos ojos, que no se hundan más de lo que están.

Reímos; y yo obedecí, y enjugando mis ojos:

-En verdad -dije- no debo llorar sino dar gracias a Dios, por no haber encontrado aquí, tras tan largos años de ausencia, ni para la mirada, ni para el alma, una sola decepción.

[Trying to delay the farewell as long as possible, Luis and all his family came with me to the Portezuelo, where the coach waited for the last travellers.

I, unable to contain my tears, cried in the corner of the carriage.

Luis, to evaporate his, laughed and told all kinds of jokes.

-Come on! - he exclaimed – Have you ever seen so much drizzle? Women! It is not yet the rainy season! *Ñaña*, be an example, dry those eyes, so they don't sink any more.

We laughed and I obeyed, drying my eyes:

-Truly- I said –I should not cry but thank God instead, for not having found here, after such long years of absence, one sole disappointment, not for the sight, nor for the soul] (*Tierra* 153-154)

Every farewell is a reminder of the very first good-bye, the one that sent her into exile:

Con tanta pena como en otro tiempo, partiendo para el destierro, alejábame, ahora, de la querida ciudad, escenario de los días más rientes de mi vida.

Algo del alma quedábase en sus calles, en sus casas, en sus jardines, en sus templos. Y cuando las colinas del Portezuelo la ocultaron (...) Luis y los suyos se apartaron de mí, lloré amargamente, con grande escándalo de los paisanos míos (...)

[With so much sorrow as that other time, leaving for exile, I now left that beloved city, scene of the happiest days of my life.

A part of my soul remained in its streets, in its houses, in its gardens, in its temples. And when the hills of the Portezuelo hid it (...) Luis and his family left me, I cried bitterly, despite the astonishment of my compatriots (...)] (*Tierra* 155-156)

Yet as her coach gets further away, Gorriti remembers she is not alone and is part of a society, which has rules. She remarks, “El llanto en una joven, es interesante, conmovedor.

El llanto en una vieja es una inconveniencia, casi una majadería. En este sentido, hallé

razonable el escándalo de mis paisanos, y procuré serenarme” [Tears in a young woman are interesting, moving. Tears in an old woman are inconvenient, almost an insolence. In this sense, I found the astonishment of my compatriots reasonable and I tried to calm myself] (*Tierra* 156-157).

The old woman has to dry her tears in order to conform to the expectations of her compatriots. Gorriti's texts reveal her consciousness of these expectations and also of the way that she deals with them. She is aware that her constant travelling is not an appropriate role for a woman and especially not for a woman her age. The tensions revealed in her discourses, the apparent contradictions are all strategies she uses, though perhaps not consciously, to assert a narrative voice that seems to conform to expected feminine roles. Gorriti identifies herself with the places she visits on a personal level and in such a way displays her desire to belong to all of these. Throughout these places she has developed a community of friends which evidences her closeness to such places. Her exile, nevertheless, is a great source of pain since it reminds her of what she lost, of the *patria* she lost.

The author, however, attempts to recover the *patria* through her sense of patriotism and her pride at descending from those heroes which fought for its independence and which created it. Since her sense of patriotism is a very “manly” pursuit as is her travelling and her writing, Gorriti displays other feminine discourses to counterbalance these. One way in which she does this is through religious awe which she presents upon describing the landscape. Another way is through her compassion which also lies in the realm of the selfless female.

The author portrays herself as an “old lady”, partly because this also allows her to contravene some of expectations of feminine discourse, but also because in this way she can also enact the authoritative voice of wisdom from old age which she uses to advice and to recommend feminine ideals to be followed by society. Gorriti describes one woman in her text who has “manly erudition” (*Tierra* 48), by which she also asserts that knowledgeable women were transgressing the masculine realm of knowledge. This is yet another tactic used by Gorriti to pretend to conform to these boundaries and yet she spent her entire life teaching young girls.

Despite the sorrow of her farewell, her voyage ends on an optimistic note, as does her text. When she returns from the trip to her native land she exclaims that this time she has left her land not as she left it upon exile, ravaged and threatened with death “sino esplendente, radiosa, abierto su fecundo suelo a todas las vías del progreso humano; con una juventud brillante, engrandecida por el trabajo y la libertad, herencia santa, que nuestros padres a precio de sangre, la conquistaron en los campos de la gloria” [but shining, radiant, its fecund earth open to all the roots of human progress; with brilliant young people, ennobled by their work and their liberty, a holy heritage, that our fathers payed for with blood and conquered it in the fields of glory] (*Tierra* 188). Gorriti is hopeful for the future of her native land, which is not just Argentina but all of America, and she is confident in the young people which will create that future. Through this observation then, she can close the cycle of her life, of her travelling and of her writing.

To conclude then, the theme of farewell in Gorriti’s life is captured in the predominant themes of wars, the absence and death of family and friends, nostalgia for the loss of the patria, loss of health, loss of youth. The one thing which she never loses is her writing: “Lo unico que a mi me queda es la pluma y los tres dedos que la sostienen en la obra de hacer

libros” [the only thing which I have left is my pen, and the three fingers that hold it in the labour of making books] (Gorriti in Mizraje, online), words which she wrote the year of her death. Throughout her text Gorriti shifts identities to suit different situations she encounters. She is a strong traveller and a needy old woman. She is compassionate when she needs to assert feminine discourses and she is patriotic when she talks about her father. Ultimately, however, her identity as writer and traveller prevails and she follows, as Berg describes, the metaphor of “la vida como viaje y la condición humana como exilio perpetuo” [life as voyage and the human condition as eternal exile] (‘Viajeras’ 77).

CONCLUSION

It has been the aim of this dissertation to analyse the travel writing of three Latin American women from the nineteenth century, from the perspective of the intersection between identity and displacement. These women have been marginal in the literary history of their respective countries of origin and have been regarded as secondary in the production of knowledge despite the fact that during their lifetimes they were considered prominent intellectuals. The authors discussed here were from privileged positions in society which gave them access to education which other women in their countries of origin could hardly have had. The condition of privilege also allowed them access to travelling and to writing and for that reason they were able to insert their voices in traditionally masculine disciplines. While they cannot be taken as speaking for Latin American women in general, their work does reveal some of the dynamics surrounding the emergence of women in modern national culture, the Creole elite in particular.

Travel literature, in its quality of a “minor genre”, appearing disseminated in journals, magazines, letters and a few book-length accounts was widely employed in the nineteenth century as a medium of expression by women in Latin America, and also in Europe and North America. Without contravening feminine roles with a “pretension” to historic or scientific writing, travel writing by women was a space where conflictive topics could be discussed. Travel writing hence, allowed these women to transgress dominant forms of knowledge by inserting topics otherwise forbidden to them. In the case of the Countess of Merlin, it permitted her to discuss politics through the essay on slavery found in her original work *La Havane*. For Soledad Acosta de Samper, it allowed her to “study” the history of Spain in order to understand the future of her country of origin. Juana Manuela

Gorriti, on the other hand, used her travelogue partly to criticise the pretensions of the higher social classes, and the betrayal of the generation following the nationalist liberators.

Each of these authors selects and employs such resources differently in order to make sense of their selves. Hence, at a more specific level, we find the countess of Merlin trying to find her identity in displacement, “as a writer *in* exile and *because* of exile. Only from the otherness she has, quite literally espoused (...) can she gain access, obliquely, to the scene of writing. Only by accepting loss (...) does she regain, on paper, her country and her childhood” (Molloy 86). Thus the Countess of Merlin, who has left her country as a child, constructs her identity through this displacement and is both Countess and Creole depending on the situation from which she speaks. Her identification with the patria occurs at the level of the text --the travelogue-- where she wishes to be part of this land she no longer knows. This results in conflict since she is also describing her land through the discourse on the tropics whereby Europeans viewed such places as idle, dirty, voluptuous, and therefore backward. The only sector with which she is able to easily identify is with the higher classes of the island to which she belongs, thus evidencing her discourses on class and race as well.

For Soledad Acosta de Samper the experience of displacement was the opportunity to fashion herself as an official representative of her nation in Spain, that is, as a modern and cosmopolitan woman. She presents herself as erudite and critic of Spanish backwardness. She is also an example for her otherwise marginalised gender, who can, through education, achieve a status almost as high as that of a male intellectual and yet this discourse is only valid for the women of her own social class. In her travel account, Acosta de Samper also proudly presents herself as daughter of an egalitarian, democratic republic, while her writing evidences her deeply conservative, moralising Catholic stance, and her contempt

for the popular classes as well as for the indigenous culture. Her discourse on equality is therefore contradicted by her desire to maintain hierarchical social structures.

Juana Manuela Gorriti witnesses the painful process of national construction in not one, but three countries which became important in her identity. Her displacement experience comes early in childhood, as it did for the Countess, but unlike Merlin she maintained bonds with her *patria* as evidenced in the numerous voyages between her native Argentina and her place of residence, Peru. Gorriti's national identity is elusive; what she names as *patria* is a concept which includes something more than just national boundaries and encompasses the spaces and places through which she travelled, lived and worked. In her travel texts, Gorriti also represents shifting identities: the strong traveller, the weak pilgrim, the old lady in need of male gallantry, the superstitious woman, and the patriotic daughter of an independence general. Her use of these representations of identity reveal that she was aware of some constraints on the production of texts by females and that she was also conscious of the ways in which these could be used to her advantage. Another aspect in Gorriti's text is her disdain for the strict hierarchical structures of her society; though she is also from a privileged stratum of society, she mocks the pretentiousness of those who shelter themselves in their social class.

The analysis endeavours to show how each writer is placed by/works with the various discourses of her time. Although many of them are contradictory, it is clear to the reader that the tensions that appear in these discourses are managed by each of the authors to their strategic advantage. Merlin simultaneously poses as both Creole and Countess, both praising her *patria* and *othering* it. Acosta de Samper's position regarding the preservation of social hierarchies and her pride in the abolition of the aristocratic privileges in America is also a contradictory stance but she builds an authoritative liberal-elite travellers' voice on

it. The tension in Gorriti's awareness of some of the constraints on the production of women's texts and her desire to conform to these while at the same time transgressing in many other ways the feminine discourses of her era are also revealed in her text but she is able to cross this with nationalism to produce herself as the wise woman of idealism.

The women analysed here were from different backgrounds and had different experiences of displacement, nevertheless they shared certain traits: first, they were all white Christian women; second, they had access to education; third, they identified with a *patria*; and fourth, they all wrote professionally. Identity then, appears in these writings as a configuration of these traits. It is also informed by history, language and culture in dynamic processes. Travel allows this shiftingness to find expression in which the text becomes a stable site for staging a variety of self-representations. Documentary mixes with autobiography, with anecdote, with social comment.

This dissertation hopes to fill in gaps not only in literary history by reevaluating the writings of nineteenth-century Latin American women travel writers, but also in the conditions of production and reception of these texts, which is, in sum, a way of producing knowledge about the history of women in Latin America and their strategies of self-fashioning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acosta de Samper, Soledad. *Viaje a España en 1892*. Volume I, Bogotá: AM Silvestre, 1893 and Volume II, Bogotá: Imprenta de La Luz, 1894.
- _____. *Una nueva lectura*. Ed. Montserrat Ordóñez. Bogotá: Ediciones Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1988.
- Araújo, Helena. *La Sherezada criolla. Ensayos sobre escritura femenina latinoamericana*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, 1989.
- Araújo, Nara. Selección, Prólogo y Notas. *Viajeras al Caribe*. Ed. María del Carmen Pérez. La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1983.
- Bassnett, Susan. *Knives and Angels: Women Writers in Latin America*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1990.
- Batticuore, Graciela and Liliana Zuccotti. "Papeles de entrecasa. Juana Manuela Gorriti." Latin American Studies Association Conference, Guadalajara, Mexico 17-19 April 2000, <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/> (27 November 2001).
- Benstock, Shari. "Authorising the Autobiographical." In her *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Berg, Mary G. "Juana Manuela Gorriti: narradora de su época (Argentina 1818-1892)." <http://www.evergreen.loyola.edu/~tward/Mujeres/critica/berg-gorriti.htm> (14 February 2002).
- _____. "Viajeras y exiliadas en la narrativa de Juana Manuela Gorriti." In *Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX*. Comp. Lea Fletcher. Buenos Aires: Feminaria Editora, 1994.
- Brintrup, Lilianet. *Viaje y escritura. Viajeras románticas chilenas*. New York: Peter Lang, 1992.
- Calderón de la Barca, Frances. *Life in Mexico During a Residence of Two Years in That Country*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1843.
- Camacho Guizado, Eduardo. "La literatura colombiana entre 1820 y 1900." In *Manual de Historia de Colombia*, Volumen II, Procultura S.A., Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1984.
- Campuzano, Luisa. Comp. *Mujeres latinoamericanas. Historia y cultura, siglo XVI-XIX*. Tomo II. La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1997.
- Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Denegri, Francesca. "Desde la ventana: Women 'Pilgrims' in Nineteenth-Century Latin-American Travel Literature." *The Modern Language Review* Vol 92 Part 2 (1997): 348-362.

- De Groot, Joanna. "'Sex' and 'Race': The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century." In *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*. Eds. Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Diadiuk, Alicia. Ed. *Viajeras anglosajonas en México*. Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1973.
- Dodd, Philip. Ed. *The Art of Travel: Essays on Travel Writing*. London: Frank Cass, 1982.
- Domenella, Ana Rosa and Dora Pasternac. Eds. *Las Voces olvidadas. Antología crítica de narradoras mexicanas nacidas en el siglo XIX*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1991.
- Domínguez, Nora. "Historia literaria de una intimidad argentina. De viajes, fragmentos y familias." In *Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX*. Comp. Lea Fletcher. Buenos Aires: Feminaria Editora, 1994.
- Drescher, Seymour. *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective*. London: Macmillan Press, 1986.
- Fernández de Oviedo, Gonzalo. "General and Natural History of the Indies." In *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. Trans. and Ed. J.M Cohen. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.
- Fletcher, Lea. Comp. *Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX*. Buenos Aires: Feminaria Editora, 1994.
- Franco, Jean. *Las conspiradoras. La representación de la mujer en México*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993.
- Frawley, Maria. *A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994.
- Fussell, Paul. *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- García-Canclini, Néstor. *Consumidores y ciudadanos. Conflictos multiculturales de la globalización*. Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1995.
- _____. *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1989.
- Gilmore, Leigh. *Autobiographics. A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Giraldo Jaramillo, Gabriel. *Bibliografía colombiana de viajes*. Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1957.
- Glave, Luis Miguel. "Letras de Mujer". <http://www.fractal.com.mx/F3glave.html> (August 25 2001).

- Gómez Ocampo, Gilberto. "El proyecto feminista de Soledad Acosta de Samper: análisis de *El corazón de la mujer*." In his *Entre María y La vorágine. La literatura colombiana finisecular (1886-1903)*. Bogotá: Ediciones Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1988.
- Gorriti, Juana Manuela. "Impresiones y paisajes." In *Misceláneas. Colección de leyendas, juicios, pensamientos, discursos, impresiones de viaje y descripciones americanas*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta de M. Biedma, 1878.
- _____. *Peregrinaciones de un alma triste*. In *Obras completas*. Salta: Fundación del Banco del Noroeste, 1993.
- _____. *La tierra natal*. Buenos Aires: Félix Lajouane, 1889.
- _____. "Un viaje al país del oro." In *Panoramas de la vida; colección de novelas, fantasías, leyendas y descripciones americanas*. Buenos Aires: Casavalle, 1876.
- _____. *Sueños y realidades*. Buenos Aires: Casavalle, 1865.
- Guerra Cunningham, Lucía. "La modalidad hermética de la subjetividad romántica en la narrativa de Soledad Acosta de Samper." In *Una nueva lectura*. Ed. Montserrat Ordóñez. Bogotá: Ediciones Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1988.
- Hahner, June. *Emancipating the Female Sex: the Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850-1940*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990.
- _____. "La prensa femenina en el siglo XIX y los derechos de las mujeres en el Brasil." In *Las mujeres latinoamericanas. Perspectivas históricas*. Comp. Asunción Lavrín. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985.
- _____. *Women Through Women's Eyes, Latin American Women in Nineteenth-Century Travel Accounts*. Wilmington: SR Books, 1998.
- Halperin Donghi, Tulio. *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*. Alianza: Madrid, 1986.
- Jaramillo, Jaime. *El pensamiento colombiano del siglo XIX*. Bogotá: Temis, 1974.
- Jaramillo, María Mercedes and Betty Osorio Eds. *Las desobedientes: mujeres de nuestra América*. Bogotá: Panamericana, 1997.
- Jaramillo, María Mercedes, Angela Robledo and Flor María Rodríguez Eds. *¿Y las mujeres? Ensayos sobre literatura colombiana*. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 1991.
- Kirkpatrick, Gwen. "The Journalism of Alfonsina Storni: A New Approach to Woman's History in Argentina." In *Women, Culture and Politics in Latin America. Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.
- Korte, Barbara. *English Travel Writing. From Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

- Lavrin, Asunción. Comp. Introducción. In *Las mujeres latinoamericanas: perspectivas históricas*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985.
- Lawrence, Karen. *Penelope Voyages. Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Londoño, Patricia. "La mujer santafereña en el siglo XIX." *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*. No. 1, Vol. XXI (1984).
<http://www.banrep.gov.co/blaavirtual/boleti3/bol1/mujer1.htm> (17 August 2001).
- . "Las publicaciones periódicas dirigidas a la mujer, 1858-1939." *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*. No. 23, Vol XXVII (1990).
<http://www.lablaa.org:80/blaavirtual/boleti5/bol23/publica.htm> (30 August 2001).
- Martin, Clarie Emilie. "Slavery in the Spanish Colonies: The Racial Politics of the Countess of Merlin." In *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women Writers of the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Ed. Doris Meyer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- Masiello, Francine. *Between Civilisation and Barbarism. Woman, Nation and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.
- Mecziem, Jenny. "'Tis Not to Divert the Reader': Moral and Literary Determinants in some Early Travel Narratives." In *The Art of Travel: Essays on Travel Writing*. Ed. Philip Dodd. London: Frank Cass, 1982.
- Melo, Jorge Orlando. "La literatura histórica en la República." *Manual de la Literatura Colombiana*. Bogotá: Procultura-Planeta, 1988.
<http://www.banrep.gov.co:80/blaavirtual/letra-g/grafia/cap2.htm> (30 May 2001).
- Méndez Rodenas, Adriana. "A Journey to the (Literary) Source: The Invention of Origins in Merlin's *Viaje a La Habana*." *New Literary History* 21 (1990): 707-731.
- . *Gender and Nationalism in Colonial Cuba: the Travels of Santa Cruz y Montalvo, Condesa de Merlin*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998.
- . "Voyage to *La Havane*: The Countess of Merlin's Preview of National Identity." *Cuban Studies* 16 (1986): 71-99.
- Mendus, Susan and Jane Rendall Eds. Introduction. *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Merlin, Condesa de. *Viaje a La Habana, Precedido de una biografía de esta ilustre cubana por la Señorita Doña Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*. Madrid: Sociedad Literaria Tipográfica, 1844.
- Meyer, Doris Ed. *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women Writers of the 19th and 20th Century*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.

- Miller, Beth. *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourse*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.
- _____. *Discourses of Difference: Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Mizraje, María Gabriela. "La escritura velada (historia y biografía en Juana Manuela Gorriti)." <http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/project/lasa95/gorriti.html> (August 21 2001).
- Molloy, Sylvia. *At Face Value: Autobiographical Writing in Spanish America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Núñez, Estuardo. Comp. *Viajeros hispanoamericanos (Temas continentales)*. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1989.
- Olivares Mansuy, Cecilia. "Enriqueta y Ernestina Larraínzar, crónicas de viaje." In *Las voces olvidadas. Antología crítica de narradoras mexicanas nacidas en el siglo XIX*. Eds. Ana Rosa Domenella and Dora Pasternac. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1991.
- Ordóñez, Montserrat. "La escritura temprana de Soledad Acosta de Samper." Latin American Studies Association Conference, Miami, 16-18 March 2000, <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/> (23 November 2001).
- _____. "One Hundred Years of Unread Writing: Soledad Acosta, Elisa Mújica and Marvel Moreno." In *Knives and Angels: Women Writers in Latin America*. Susan Bassnett, ed. London, New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1990.
- _____. "Soledad Acosta de Samper: una nueva lectura." In *Una nueva lectura*. Soledad Acosta de Samper. Bogotá: Ediciones Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1988.
- "Oro colombiano en manos extranjeras" *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, No. 3, Vol. XXII (1985). <http://www.banrep.gov.co/blaavirtual/boleti3/bol3/oro.htm> (30 August 2001).
- Pagden, Anthony. "The Creation of Identity in Colonial Spanish America: c. 1520-c.1830." In his *The Uncertainties of Empire: Essays in Iberian and Ibero-American Intellectual History*. Aldershot, Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum, 1994.
- Paquette, Robert L. *Sugar is Made with Blood: the Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1988.
- Patiño, Beatriz. "A propósito de una reedición." *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*. No. 19, Vol. XXVI (1989). <http://www.banrep.gov.co/blaavirtual/boleti5/bol19/proposi.htm> (22 August 2001).

- Pérez, María del Carmen. *Viajeras al Caribe*. La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1983.
- Poderti, Alicia. "La nación imaginada. Trayectos ideológicos y ficcionales en el espacio andino." http://www.hum.gu.se/ibero/publikationer/anales2/ana_2PDF-artiklar/03-Alicia%20.pdf (14 February 2002).
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Don't Interrupt Me' The Gender Essay as Conversation and Countercanon." In *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women Writers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ed. Doris Meyer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- _____. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Robinson, Jane. *Unsuitable for Ladies, an Anthology of Women Travelers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Rodríguez-Arenas, Flor María. "Soledad Acosta de Samper, pionera de la profesionalización de la escritura femenina colombiana en el siglo XIX: *Dolores, Teresa la limeña* y *El corazón de la mujer* (1869)." In *¿Y las mujeres? Ensayos sobre literatura colombiana*. Eds. María Mercedes Jaramillo, Angela Inés Robledo and Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 1991.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge, 1979.
- Scott, Nina M. "Juana Manuela Gorriti's *Cocina Ecléctica*: Recipes as Feminine Discourse." In *Recipes for Reading Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*. Ed. Anne L. Bower. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.
- Schriber, Mary Suzanne. *Telling Travels, Selected Writings by Nineteenth-Century American Women Abroad*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995.
- Sharpe, Jenny. *Allegories of Empire: the Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993.
- Shattock, Joanne. "Travel Writing Victorian and Modern: A Review of Recent Research." In *The Art of Travel: Essays on Travel Writing*. Ed. Phillip Dodd. London: Frank Cass, 1982.
- Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices. In their *Women, Autobiography, Theory: a Reader*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
- Socolow, Susan. *The Women of Colonial Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Suárez, Lucía de las Mercedes. *Caribbean Women Claiming their Islands*. Diss. Duke University, 1999. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1999.

- Szurmuk, Monica. *"Viajeras": Women's Travel Writing and the Construction of Self and National Identity in Argentina, 1850-1930*". Diss. University of California, San Diego, 1994. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994.
- Tinling, Marion. *With Women's Eyes: Visitors to the New World 1775-1918*. Hamden, CT.: Archon Books, 1993.
- Tristán, Flora. *Peregrinaciones de una paria*. Lima: Editorial Cultura Antártica, 1946.
- Vallejo, Catherine. "Legitimación de la expresión femenina y apropiación de la lengua en *Una holandesa en América* (1876) de Soledad Acosta de Samper: rebeldía y conquista." Latin American Studies Association Conference, Miami, 16-18 March 2000. <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/> (23 November 2001).
- Venegas Filardo, Pascual. *Viajeros a Venezuela en los siglos XIX y XX*. Caracas: Monte Avila, 1983.
- Viñas, David. *De Sarmiento a Dios, viajeros argentinos a USA*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998.
- Wood, Frances. *Did Marco Polo go to China?* London: Secker and Warburg, 1995.
- Yeager, Gertrude. "Juana Manuela Gorriti: Writer in Exile." In *The Human Tradition in Latin America. The Nineteenth Century*. Eds. Judith Ewell and William H. Beezley. Wilmington Del: Scholarly Resources Imprint, 1989.

